

TM

PlayStation®Portable

THE OFFICIAL GUIDE BOOK

[EXCLUSIVE REVIEW!]

Tomb Raider: Legend

Lara's first online adventure, only on PSP

[PLUS!]

● **KILLZONE: LIBERATION**

The ultimate hand-held shooter?

● **GUN: SHOWDOWN**

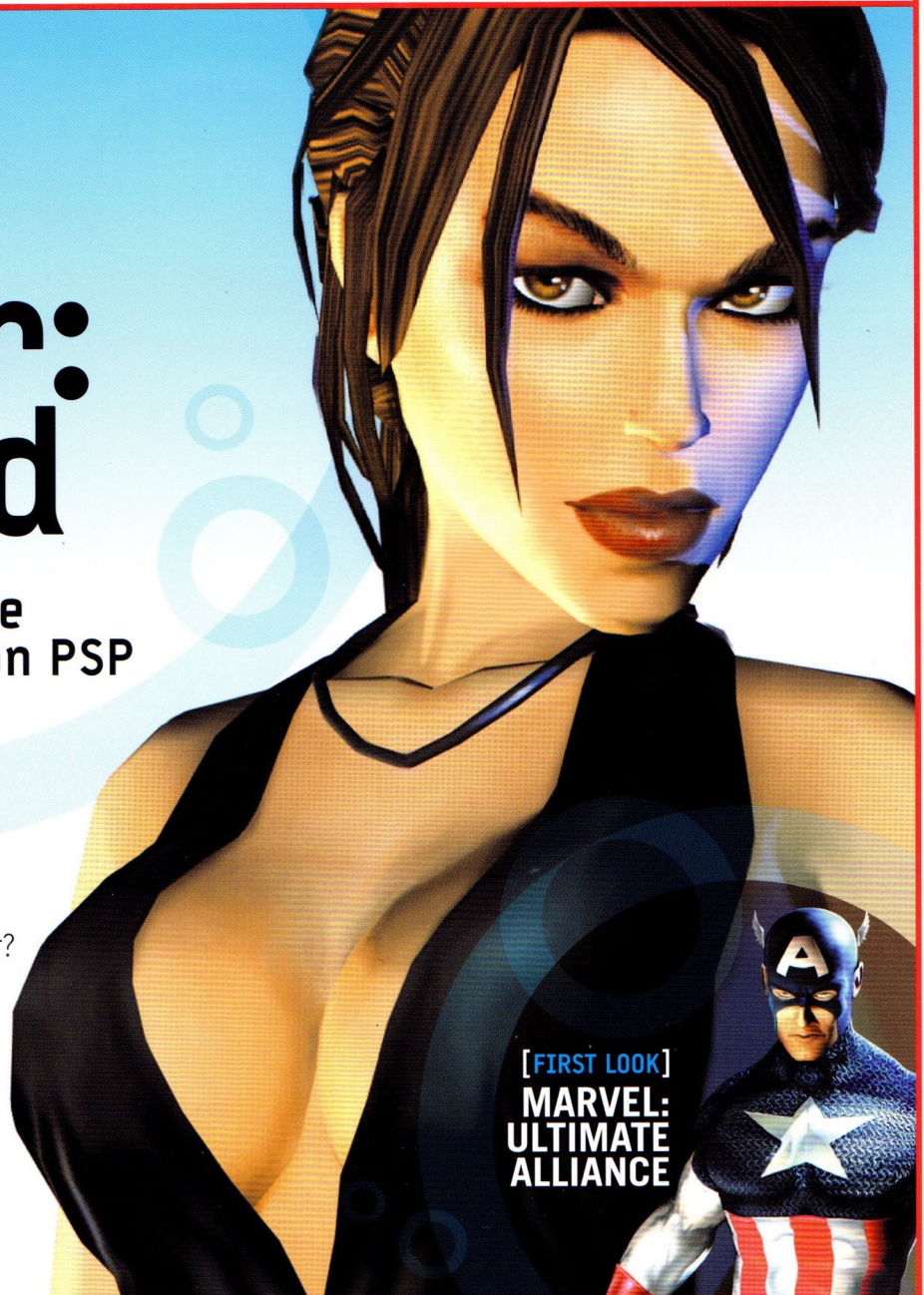
Online duelling with PSP!

● **GANGS OF LONDON**

The Getaway gang returns!

● **SYPHON FILTER**

Gabe's best adventure yet?



[FIRST LOOK]
**MARVEL:
ULTIMATE
ALLIANCE**



Photo



Music



Video



Game



Network

WHAT'S YOUR AWAY STRATEGY?

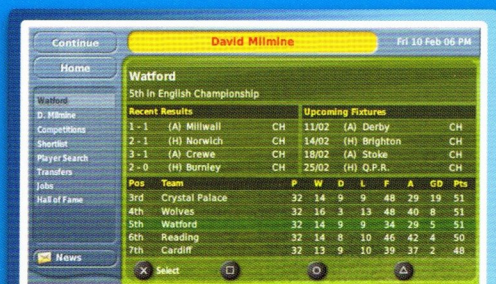


**"The best footy management
game ever goes portable"**

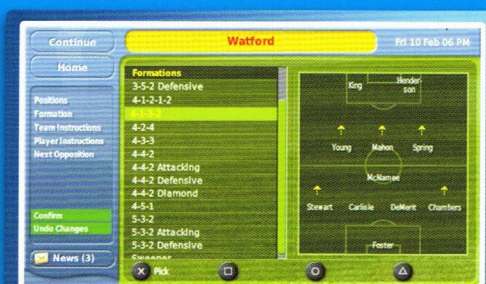
Go Play

OUT FROM 13TH APRIL

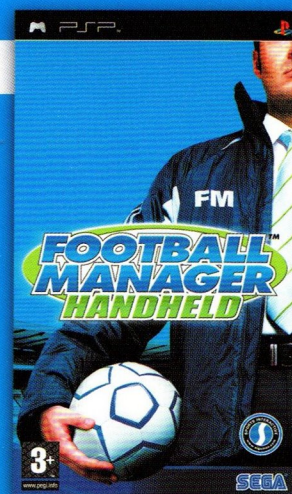
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on the move.



Control team tactics and individual
player instructions.



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www.sega.co.uk



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WRITE: Official PS2 Magazine Special Edition,
Future Publishing Ltd, 30 Monmouth St, Bath BA1 2BW
TELEPHONE: 01225 442244
FAX: 01225 732275
EMAIL: pspmag@futurenet.co.uk

EDITORIAL

EDITOR: Ian Dean
ART EDITOR: Terry Stokes
DESIGN SQUAD: Daniel Vincent, Darren Phillips,
Andrew Hind, Alvin Weetman, Rob Bowen,
Milford Coppock, Ziggi Baker.

CONTRIBUTORS

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS: Daniel Dawkins,
Lee Hall, Leon Hurley, Dan Brown, Mike Oldman
Jem Roberts, Nathan Irvine, Andy Hartup, George
Walter, Ben Wilson, Joel Snape, Alex Dale, Leon Hurley

CONTRIBUTING PRODUCTION:

Dan Brown, Greg MacGregor, Jes Bickham, Jenny Dodd
CONTRIBUTING DESIGNERS: Dan Vincent, Debbie Vossler
PRODUCTION CO-ORDINATOR: Lee Thomas
PRODUCTION MANAGER: Rose Griffiths

ADVERTISING

BATH OFFICE
ADVERTISING DIRECTOR: Jayne Caple
HEAD OF DIVISIONAL SALES: Clare Williamson
HEAD OF TRADING: Scott Longstaff
AD MANAGER: Clair Raithby
Call Bath advertising on: 01225 442244
Fax Bath advertising on: 01225 480325
LONDON OFFICE
COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT MANAGER: Poorvi Smith
Call London advertising on: 0207 317 2600

MANAGERIAL & MARKETING

DEPUTY SENIOR EDITOR: Mike Goldsmith
KETING PROMOTIONS MANAGER: Kim Brown
SEAS LICENSING: Simon Wear
ORIAL DIRECTOR: Jim Douglas
JP ART EDITOR: Robin Abbott
JISHER: Matt Pierce

SCRIPTIONS

Future Publishing Ltd, FREEPOST BS4900,
Somerton, Somerset TA11 7BR
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+44 1458 271100 (Overseas)
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Robert Price

Group Finance Director:

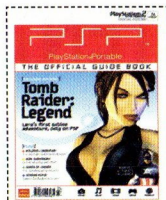
John Bowman

Tel: +44 1225 442 244

www.thefuturenetworkplc.uk

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EDS INTRO

Volume 4 2006



Time To Play

This is where everything changes. This month we've managed to do what no other UK mag can and offer every reader the chance to play the biggest game on PSP, out of the bag.

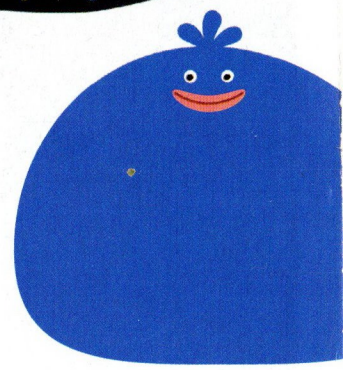
That's right, tucked inside the bag with this issue of the *Official PSP Guidebook* is the UK's first and only covermounted UMD. Just plug that little beauty into your PSP and play the likes of *Burnout: Legends*, *Lemmings* and *Virtua Tennis World Tour* right now. We've also managed to scoop an exclusive playable demo of *Loco Roco*, one of the most original platform games you'll find on any console.

It's not all playable games either. Our UMD also includes the latest music, movies and PSP exclusive short films. Fancy a bit of Green Day? You've got it. The latest trailers of *Stealth*, *Steamboy* and *The Longest Yard*? They're yours. Plug our UMD into your PSP and you'll never have to struggle with a boring bus ride again.

Don't think we're all about the demos either, as this edition of the *Official PSP Guidebook* is packed with hot exclusives on the biggest PSP games. Along with the first review of *Tomb Raider: Legend* we have breaking details on *Gun: Showdown*, *WWE Smackdown Vs Raw 2007* and *Marvel: Ultimate Alliance*.

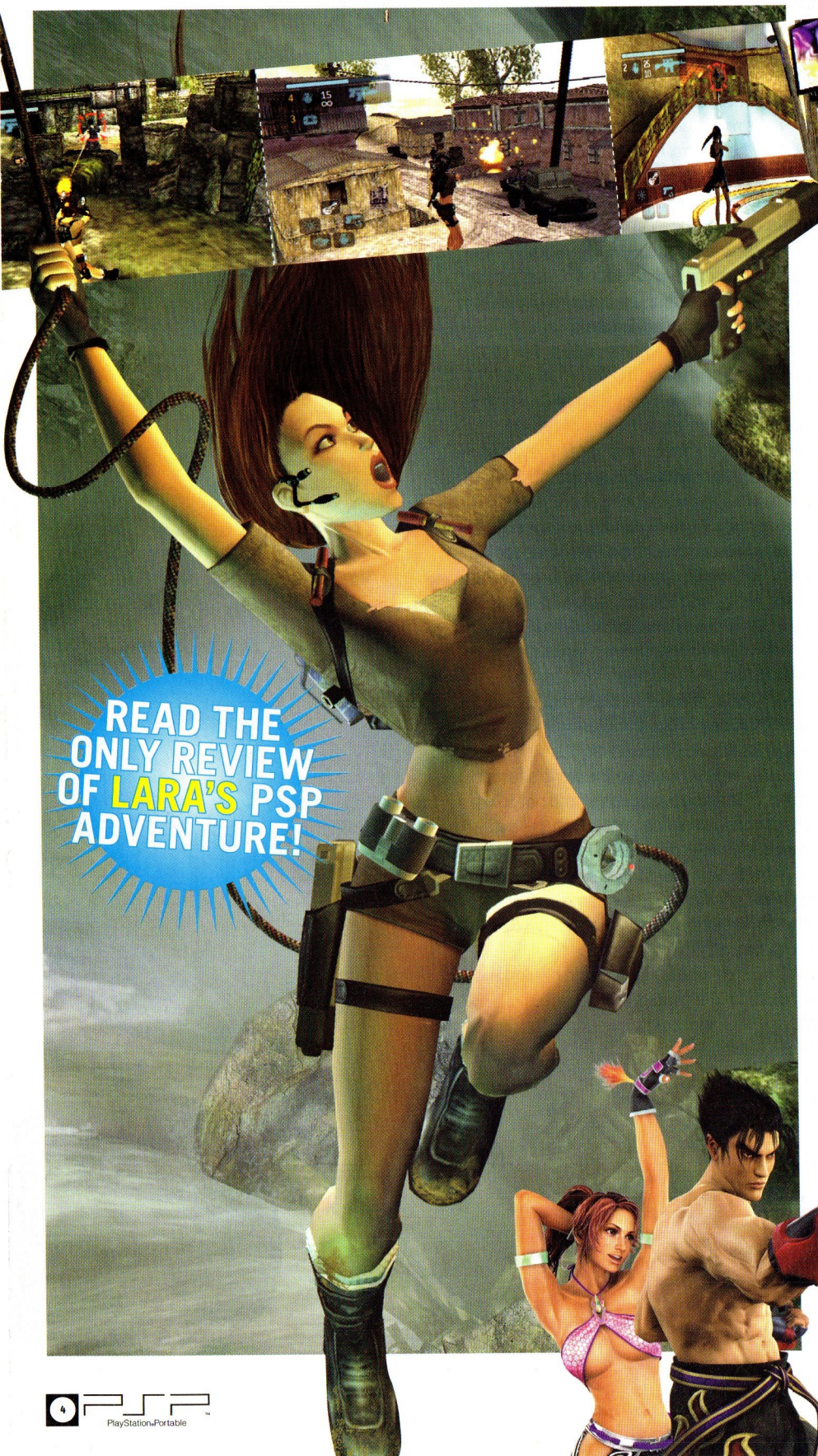
Our packed reviews section includes over 25 new PSP games, proving Sony's diminutive console is thriving. There are so many new and exclusive games coming to the world's fastest selling console that you can't afford not to dip into our reviews section. Along with the big hitters such as *Syphon Filter: Dark Mirror*, *SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs Fireteam Bravo* and the cheeky *Daxter* there are some unique PSP games to explore - *World Poker Tour 2K6* proved an addictive handful.

With our packed UMD, playable demos and exclusives on the biggest PSP games, this *Official PSP Guidebook* is your ultimate source for PSP gaming. ■



[COVER FEATURE]

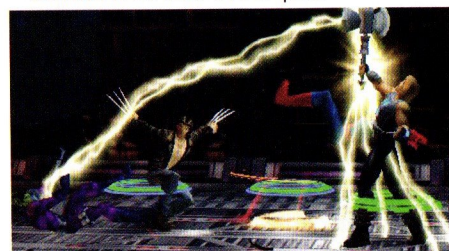
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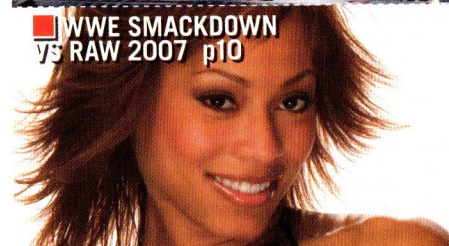
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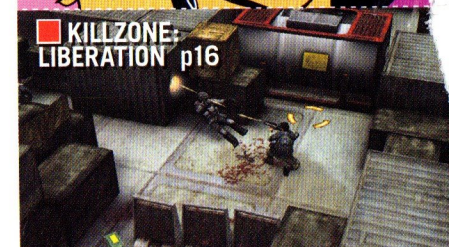
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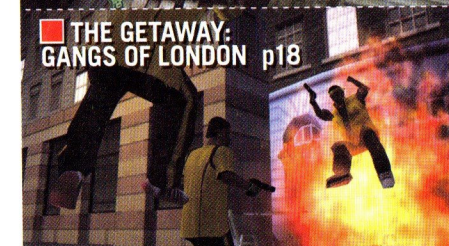
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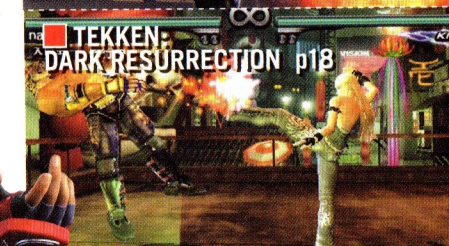
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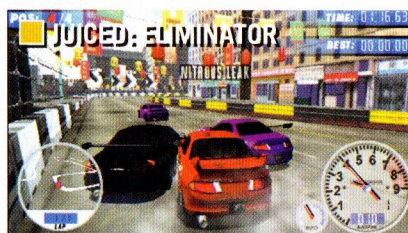
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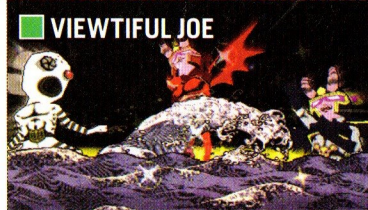
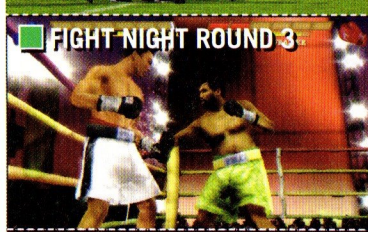
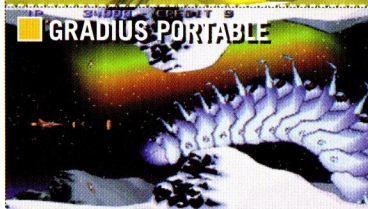
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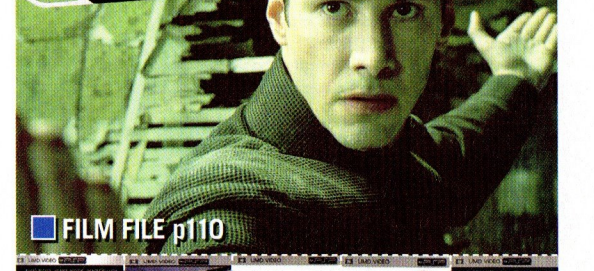
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[7000 new games!]

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[PLAYABLE GAMES]

■ The only place to play the biggest hits of PSP, now!

[PLAYABLE UMD™ DEMO!]

Burnout: Legends

EA's smash hit is ready to go!

PLAY
IT!

- BURNOUT: LEGENDS
- LEMMINGS
- MERCURY
- MEDIEVIL: RESURRECTION
- TOCA RACE DRIVER 2
- LOCO ROCO
- VIRTUA TENNIS
- WIPEOUT PURE

[PLAY THEM NOW!]
8 HIT GAMES!
Play the PSP's biggest hit
games right now!



■ **MERCURY**
The PSP's brain-teasing
puzzler is yours!



■ **TOCA RACE DRIVER 2**
Experience the ride of
your life, on PSP!

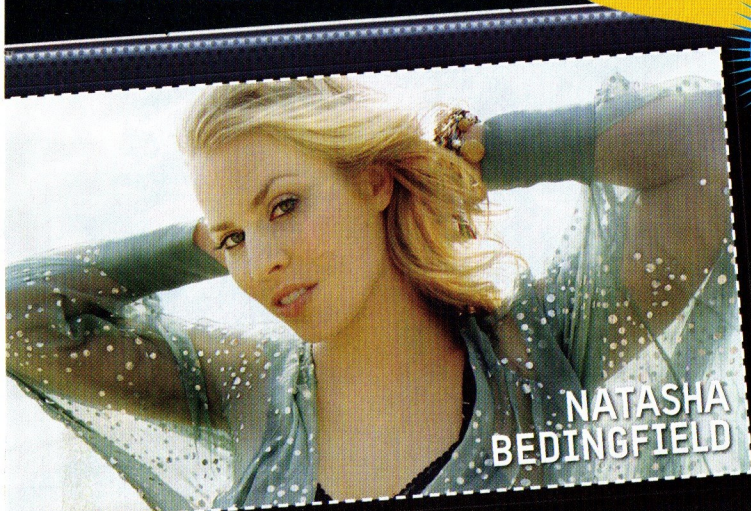


■ **WIPEOUT: PURE**
Sony's sci-fi racer turbos
onto your PSP!

[MUSIC]

■ The best music videos for your PSP!

- GREEN DAY
- THE ROLLING STONES
- RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS
- NATASHA BEDINGFIELD
- FAITHLESS



HEAR
IT!

[VIDEO]

■ Exclusive films and movie trailers!

- STEAMBOY (TRAILER)
- STEALTH (TRAILER)
- BEWITCHED (TRAILER)
- THE LONGEST YARD (TRAILER)
- ROACH (FILM)
- TITANTIC: THE TRUE STORY (FILM)
- TERRIBLE KISSES (FILM)

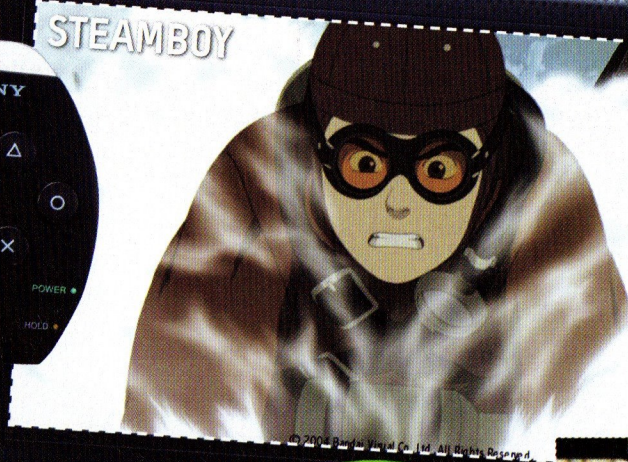


PLAY
IT!



PLAY
IT!

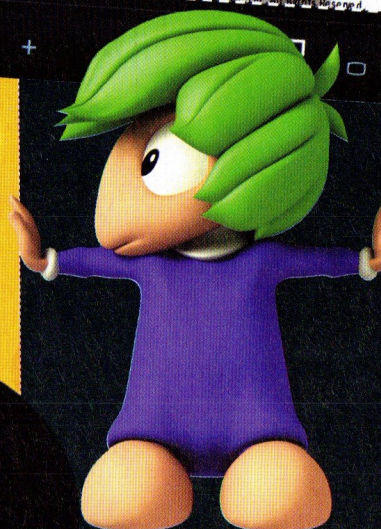
STEAMBOY



WATCH
IT!



[EXCLUSIVE PLAYABLE DEMO]
LOCO ROCO

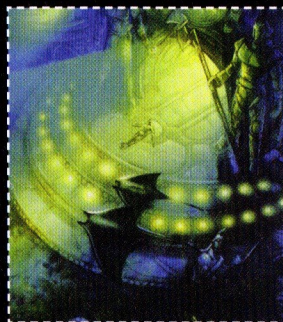


[FRONTEND]

News, gossip, trivia, the whole nine yards



Ok, he looks cool now, but his fingers are going to be terribly sore in the morning



A glimpse of the RPG's Atlantis setting, proof of *Marvel: Ultimate Alliance's* huge scale (above)

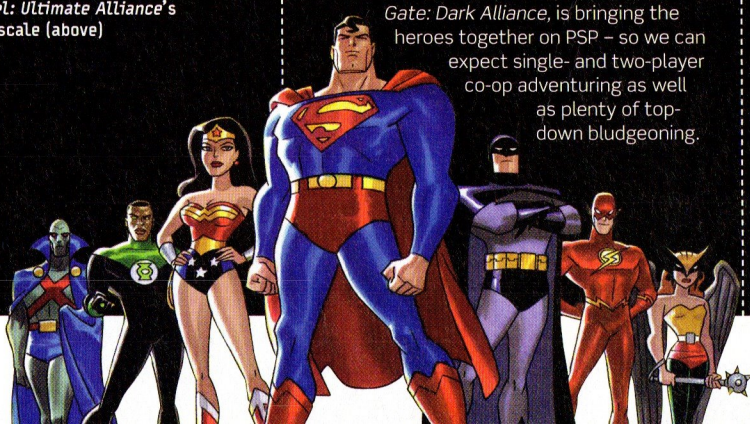
DC want in...

More comic book heroes coming to a hand-held near you

If ramping up stats and chit-chatting gets you excited, then news that *DC Comics* is to go head-to-head with *Marvel: Ultimate Alliance* should make you happy, and it's exclusively for PSP.

Warner Bros has revealed that *Justice League Heroes*, a new action-RPG based on the comic-to-cartoon hit, will be heading to the hand-held later this year. The premise has classic DC heroes Batman, Superman, Green Lantern and Wonder Woman (amongst many others) teaming up to save the universe.

Snowblind Studios, developer of *Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance*, is bringing the heroes together on PSP - so we can expect single- and two-player co-op adventuring as well as plenty of top-down bludgeoning.



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SMACKDOWN 2007
 >p10 Exclusive details of the big brawler on the small screen!



GTA: VICE CITY STORIES
 >p14 Revealed – the name of the PSP-exclusive romp



KILLZONE: LIBERATION
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TEKKEN: DARK RESURRECTION
 >p19 Exclusive new details of PSP Tekken's game modes and secrets

THE DREAM TEAM

More than 140 heroes gather for *Marvel: Ultimate Alliance*

Recently we've had dozens of Marvel-licensed adventures – *Fantastic 4*, *Spider-Man* and *The Punisher* for example. However, there has yet to be a game that combines every hero into one epic adventure, until now.

Developed by RPG experts RavenSoft, *Marvel: Ultimate Alliance* will offer over 140 superheroes to control. You will be able to create and customize a hero team from an almost complete Marvel roster, including favourites such as Captain America, Elektra,

Making it even harder to maintain your credibility is the cast of villains lining up against you. Dr. Doom has resurrected the Masters of Evil – the most destructive collection of supervillains ever assembled

Wolverine, and Spider-Man. Selecting from an initial line-up of 20 characters you unlock new superheroes as the story is played out.

Customization will play a huge part. As well as building the stats on your heroes and developing new abilities, you will also be able to select your team's name, icon and even a vehicle to race to the rescue in.

Linked to your team's development will be a reputation level. As you battle through

the story and side-quests, your standing in the Marvel universe will rise and fall.

Making it even harder to maintain your credibility is the cast of villains lining up against you. Dr. Doom has resurrected the Masters of Evil – the most destructive collection of supervillains ever assembled, all determined to see your rep destroyed.

If you've played the *X-Men: Legends* games then you'll understand how *Marvel: Ultimate Alliance* will handle. This action-RPG will feature intuitive controls to attack

your foes, but now you will have more input over where and how you fight. Depending on the character you will be able to fight in the

air, on the ground and even underwater. There will be real skill needed to perfect the combat, with grapple, melee, distance and blocking moves to master.

Details aside, it's the scale of *Marvel: Ultimate Alliance* that is still the game's draw. As well as the largest group of superheroes and villains ever gathered for a game, the journey will be epic – there

are a planned 17 locations taken from the Marvel universe. Also, unlike *Legends*, your route through the game will be less linear. The missions you accept, the characters you team-up and the relationships between heroes will change over time and affect the outcome of the game – and perhaps even the Marvel universe itself.

The PSP has been lacking a truly great RPG and *Marvel: Ultimate Alliance* could be our saviour. Expect an in-depth hands-on with Captain America and pals next issue. ■

Essentials... Marvel Ultimate Alliance

PUBLISHER: Activision
DEVELOPER: RavenSoft

BACKGROUND: Raven has been around for nearly 20 years developing PC and console RPGs and FPSs. The company began life with early PC shooters *Hexen* and *Soldier Of Fortune*, before branching onto consoles with action games and RPGs that include *Jedi Academy* and the excellent *X-Men: Legends* series on PS2.

FIRST GAME: *Black Crypt* (1992)

LAST GAME: *X-Men: Legends II* (2005)

CURRENTLY: *Marvel: Ultimate Alliance*



Incoming

The bit where we tell you about some new games...

1.Carnage Heart: Genki's sequel to the 1995 PSone mech classic is set to offer hardcore custom combat in this new PSP remake.

2.Rayman 4: Ubisoft has confirmed that a new Rayman adventure is in the works and should be leaping our way this Christmas.

3.TOCA 2006: Codemasters is set to release a TOCA update in America, featuring ten new tracks and the PS2's career mode.

4.Formula One 06: Sony's new F1 racer will pull onto the shelves in June featuring a new online career mode.

5.Earache: Heavy Metal Racing: the extreme metal record label gets its own car combat game, due for release in September.



SMACK IS BACK

New WWE game to hit PSP in November

OFFICIAL
PlayStation-Portable
EXCLUSIVE!

THQ is set to release a second wrestling game for the hand-held later this year, and if first impressions are anything to go by it will smash previous effort *SmackDown! Vs Raw 2006* out of the ring.

SmackDown! Vs Raw 2007 will feature extra weapons and new environments, where wrestlers can ram each other into equipment and perform insane stunts. More excitingly there will be enhancements to last year's excellent season mode, where users could port data to and from their PS2 at will.

Console editions of the game will see a totally new analogue control system, but the publisher is yet to confirm whether this will also be ported over to PSP. Just three



May 12th
Started as a nobody

May 27th
Hunted a herd
of Mosswine

June 1st
I battled bravely to win
an armoured shield



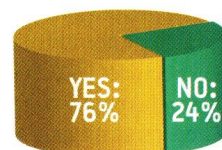
Big Issue

wrestlers have been confirmed - the multi-time champ Kurt Angle, infamous chav rapper John Cena, and high-flyer Rey Mysterio Jnr, but there's no doubt *SmackDown! Vs Raw 2007* will be the most comprehensive grapple game ever.

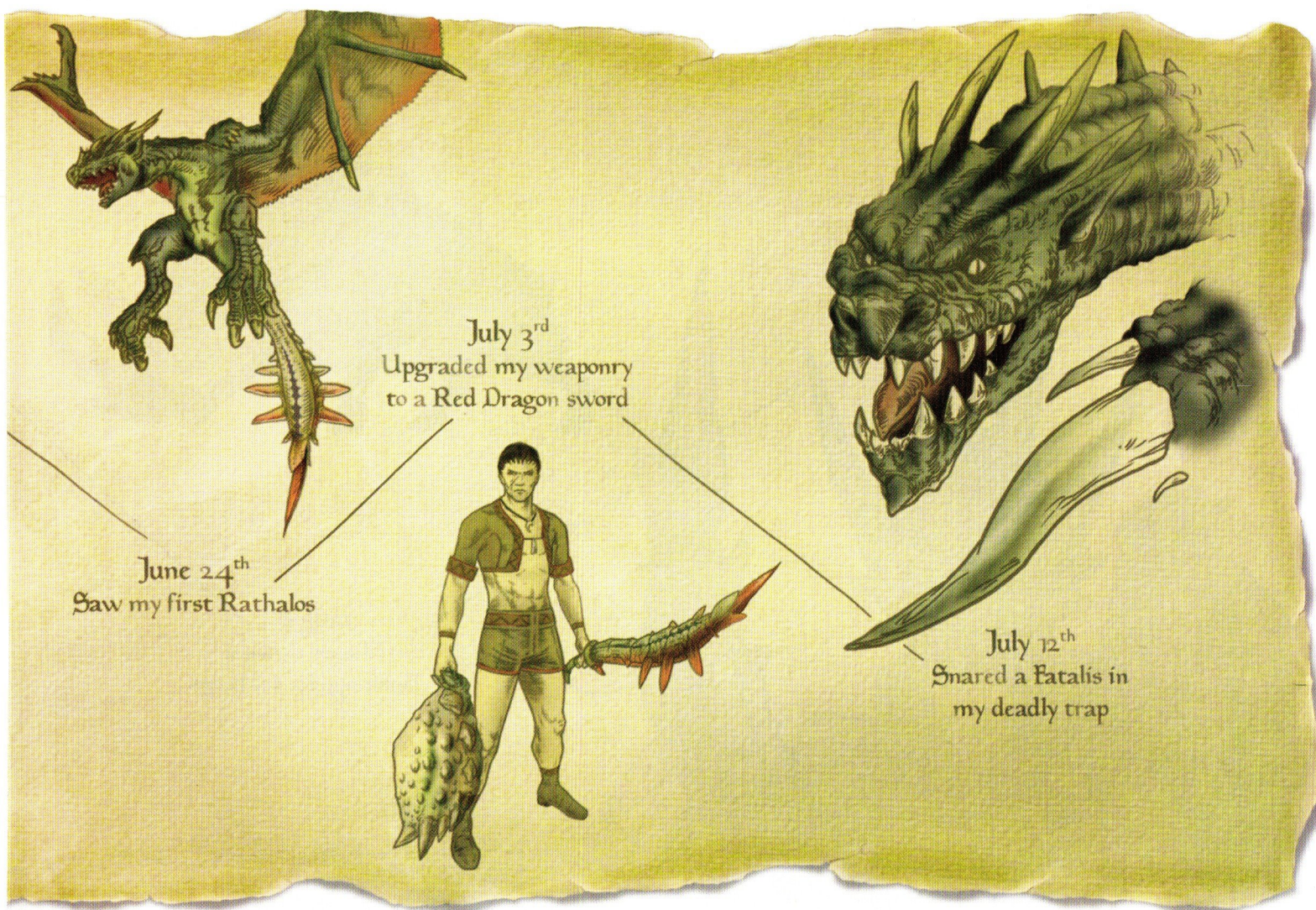
Not that the stars themselves will have much chance to enjoy it. At the recent WWE Superstar Challenge in Chicago, they were prohibited from

playing backstage! "Because a few of us were playing PSP so much the WWE has banned games from the locker room," Intercontinental Champion Shelton Benjamin told us. "With me being the Superstar Challenge champion I take all the heat for any videogame fiasco." Looks like the wrestlers will have to take their hard-fought PSP battles to the bogs from now on. ■

"Sony's Product evaluation group manager Mark Vitello has said the PSP is lacking a mascot character, such as a Mario or Master Chief. Do you agree?"



● ● ● NEXT ISSUE: We'll have the world exclusive first play of *WWE Smackdown Vs Raw 2007*!



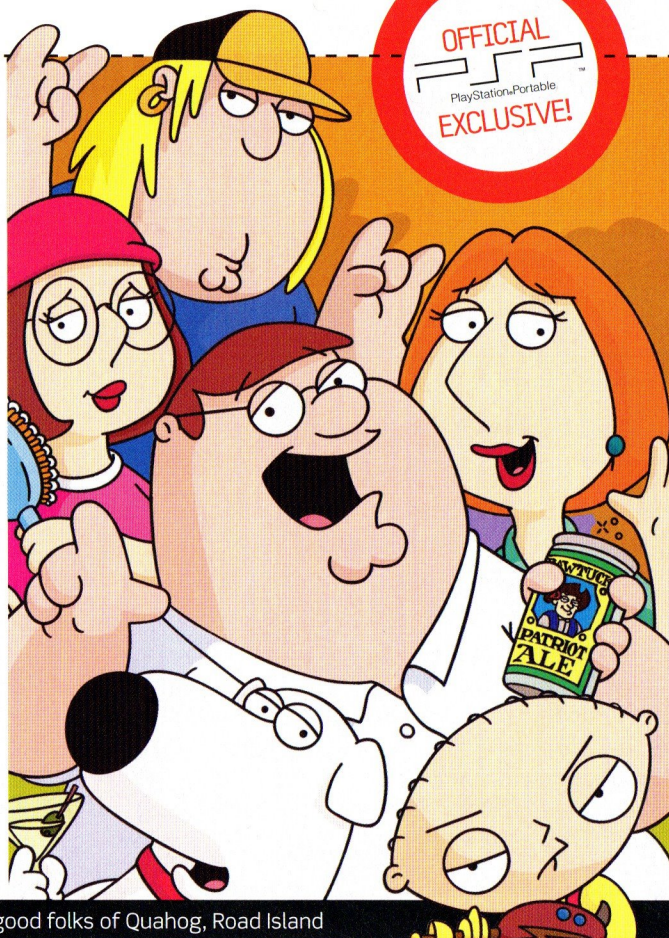
FAMILY TIES

2K Games find the right guys for the job

Converting irreverent, edgy cartoons to videogames hasn't always gone well. The Simpsons lost its satire and Futurama was devoid of surprises, so news of a new game based on the anarchic Family Guy wasn't greeted with whoops of joy and the sound of a keg being cracked open.

Hold on though, a little digging behind the scenes throws-up the developer High Voltage, last seen cavorting with Leisure Suit Larry in Magna Cum Laude. That game was a riot of innuendo, cartoon debauchery and the slick melding of genres - adventure, action and puzzles all came together in an orgy of fun.

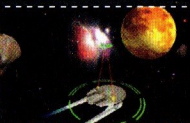
So, when Christopher Hartman, Managing Director of 2K Games, says: "the irreverent Family Guy humour that has made the show a smash hit opens up exciting and untapped possibilities in



Small screen

Breaking PSP news and rumours from around the world...

Stacked With Daniel Negreanu
Just when you thought it was safe to leave the table another poker game throws its chips into the PSP pot for all the money. The difference with Snacked, however, is that developer Myelin Media is going all in to ensure the game makes full use of the PSP's functionalities. What stands Stacked out from the crowd is the word 'interoperability'. This means the PSP version of Stacked can be connected to the PS2 version, so you can maintain a persistent career whether at home or touring the

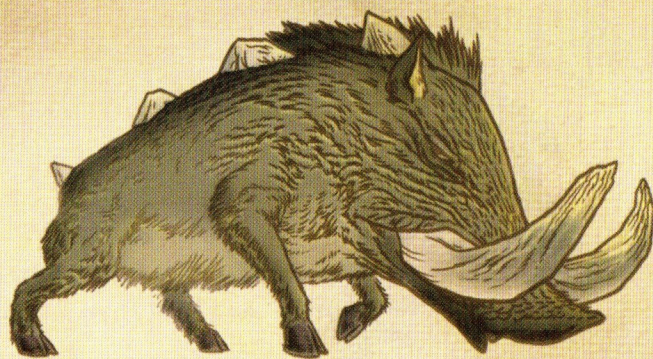


Star Trek Tactical Assault

Developed by: Bethesda/Quicksilver Software
Release: September 06
Fresh from stunning the gaming world with the boundless Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion, Canadian developer Bethesda has turned its attentions to the PSP. The Trekkie based strategy sim, Star Trek: Tactical Assault will offer up real time space combat using the ships and weapons of the original Captain Kirk TV series. Packed with

NEXT ISSUE: Expect a hands-on with the good folks of Quahog, Road Island

July 17th
Forged a helmet
out of its remains



Aug 8th
Chased down a
Bullfang for its fangs

[PSP FIRST!]

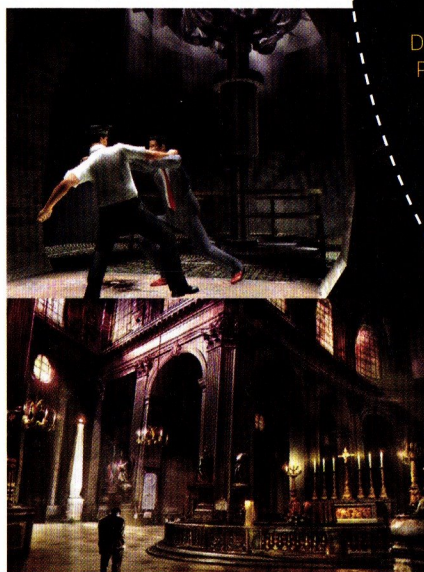
BREAKING THE CODE

The biggest movie of the summer is heading to the smallest screen

There's nothing quite as big as The Da Vinci Code right now. The book is still flying off the shelves around the world and the Tom Hanks movie, due for release this summer, is being touted as the blockbuster to chew popcorn through.

So, news of a PSP version of the Da Vinci Code shouldn't come as a surprise. The game is still being secretly hidden from view at 2K Games, though an insider revealed a possible July release could be on the cards. Details of the PSP game were thin on the ground, though with The Collective developing this hand-held version as well as the console game, we would expect a pretty accurate conversion of the PS2 adventure.

However, with the extra development time and Sony's push to promote original PSP game content we would expect some unique PSP



NEXT ISSUE: Expect the first screens of 2K Game's monster movie license.

No.1 Metal Slug Collection

DEVELOPER: SNK PLAYMORE

PUBLISHER: SNK PLAYMORE

RELEASE: TBC

Hardware has come and gone over the last 10 years, the wallet emptying Neo Geo gave way to the disrespected Sega Saturn and in turn the triumphantly PlayStation saw PS2 take a hold. And in all of this the Metal Slug series has kept right on going, waving two fingers at each

passing hardware generation as it sticks firmly to two dimensions. To say this series is cherished is an understatement.

What better platform to launch a new Metal Slug then, than the retro heavy PSP? We love our old classics and can't wait to join Marco, Eri, Tarma and Fio in another frenetic old-school shoot-out against 2D, hand-animated aliens, super-tanks and camels. It's at this point that we'd like to draw your attention to the word 'collection' in the title, as along with the new predictably riotous Metal Slug 5 will be Metal Slugs one to four and Metal Slug X, all on one UMD.



[NEWS]

Retro Reloaded

Classic games of yesteryear without the hassle of being 10

Aug 22nd
Now I'm a
Monster Hunter...

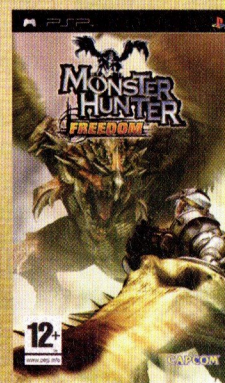
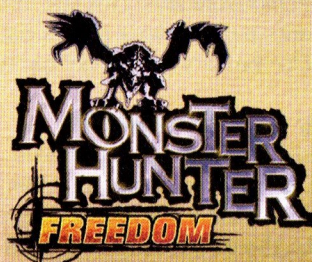


Aug 23rd
...But I can't get
too cocky



PSP

CAPCOM
capcom-europe.com



Start As A Nobody. End As A Legend.
Japans Biggest Selling Game On The PSP Out May 12th

IS GTA
RETURNING TO
THE '80'S?

PSP FAQ! GTA: VICE CITY STORIES

The pitch: Return to GTA's *Vice City* to wear pastel suits and cruise neon streets

Small screen

Breaking PSP news and rumours from around the world...

Sid Meier's Pirates!
It's hard to imagine but the legendary Sid Meier, the PC programmer behind hits such as *Civilization* and *Railway Tycoon*, is planning to convert the classic *Pirates!* action strategy sim to PSP. Excitingly, the new PSP edition will feature 30% more gameplay than the existing versions of the adventure. Plus, expect WiFi support for online piratey action. We can't wait for this one.



Dungeon Siege: Throne Of Agony
One of the best action-RPGs of the past couple of years has been Gas Powered Games' *Dungeon Siege* series. Known for its startling visuals and deep non-linear missions, it's a genuine surprise to hear the series is making the leap to PSP.

The new hand-held exclusive game, called *Throne Of Agony* will feature a new playable race, exclusive story and missions and an open-ended structure. Expect more next issue.



The Fast And The Furious III
This licence has been dragging its wheels around the games highway for about three years now, but it could finally see the light of day on PSP.

The new *The Fast And The Furious* game has shifted developer and publisher, with Namco and studio Eutechnyx now at the wheel. The game will be based on the forthcoming movie, *The Fast And The Furious: Tokyo Drift*. Namco is promising never before seen drift mechanics and massive custom options, including over 500 licensed body kits and 100 types of wheel. Impressive.

1. What's Vice City?

After the success of *GTA III*, Rockstar North went back to the '80s and returned with *GTA: Vice City*, an action-packed pastiche that referenced *Miami Vice* and *Scarface* among others on the way to its typically blood-soaked finale. The map was smaller but the options to experiment in the game's free-form world grew with the ability to buy new clothes, businesses and fly for the first time in the blood-soaked *GTA* universe.

2. So, what's the PSP news?

Well, Rockstar has made no attempt to hide the fact that a new PSP *GTA* was in the works since its parent company, Take-Two, slipped the game into its recent financial report. However, recently speculation of where and when the game will be set hit fever pitch when Take-Two registered a trademark protection on the name *Vice City Stories*.

3. What's expected from the game?

Judging by the work that went into *Liberty City Stories* it would be fair to expect more of the same. *Vice City Stories* should feature a new story, new characters and hopefully some new WiFi play modes to get stuck into, as these proved incredibly addictive in *Liberty City*.

4. Any chance this is all a joke?

It's not like Rockstar to muck about with its flagship series or waste time registering trademarks that won't see the light of day. In the past the names of *Vice City* and *San Andreas* have been earmarked just weeks before the games' grand unveiling. And why not *Vice City Stories*? Chronologically it's the next instalment in the series and the original game's map would be ideal for the PSP's on-the-hoof gameplay.

5. Any other GTA news?

Well, *Vice City Stories* was registered in relation to two other uses; either in the form of merchandising or as a film or possible TV series. This doesn't mean anything is in the works now, but it does give further credence to a *Vice City Stories* game. ■

grand theft auto

vice city

Essentials... **GTA**

PUBLISHER: Rockstar

DEVELOPER: Rockstar North

BACKGROUND: This Dundee-based studio was originally called DMA Design and made a name for itself with the puzzle game *Lemmings* and then the N64 shooter *Body Harvest*. Soon after work began on the *Grand Theft Auto* series, which hit fever pitch with *GTA III* in 2001 and subsequent massive-selling sequels *Vice City*, *San Andreas* and *Liberty City Stories*.

FIRST GAME: *Lemmings* (1991)

LAST GAME: *GTA: Liberty City Stories* (2005)

CURRENTLY: *GTA: Vice City Stories*

EXTRA: *GTA: Liberty City Stories* scored a massive 9/10 in volume 3 of the *Official PSP Guidebook*.

[PSP PLANNER]



May

Ape Escape P
Guilty Gear Judgement
Tomb Raider: Legend
Field Commander
Untold Legends 2
Star Wars: Shadow Strike
NBA Ballers: Rebound
MX Vs ATV
FIFA World Cup Germany 2006
The Godfather

Sony
Majesco
Eidos
Ubisoft
Ubisoft
Ubisoft
Midway
THQ
EA
EA

June

Miami Vice
Talkman
Syphon Filter: Dark Mirror
Megaman Powered Up
Viewtiful Joe: Red Hot Rumble
Infected
Juiced: Eliminator
Pirates Of The Caribbean 2
Monster Hunter: Freedom
Stateshift
World Tour Golf
(PLAY IT) LocoRoco
Ultimate Ghosts 'n Goblins
Steel Horizon
Konami Battle Chess
Bubble Bobble Evolution
Super Monkey Ball Adventure
X-Men 3

VU Games
Sony
Sony
Capcom
Capcom
THQ
THQ
Buena Vista
Capcom
Oxygen
Oxygen
Sony
Capcom
Konami
Konami
Rising Star Games
Sega
Activision

July

Tekken: Dark Resurrection
Da Vinci Code
Gradius
Superman Returns
Scarface PSP
Eragon
Capcom Classic Remixed

Sony
Take2
Konami
EA
VU Games
VU Games
Capcom

August

Gangs Of London
Killzone: Liberation
Rush
Metal Gear Ac!d 2
Power Stone Collection

Sony
Sony
Midway
Konami
Capcom

Coming Soon

Call Of Duty PSP
Pro Evolution Soccer 10
Sid Meier's Pirates!
Dungeon Siege
Family Guy
Mortal Kombat: Unchained
Gran Turismo Mobile
Brothers In Arms PSP
WWE Smackdown

Activision
Konami
Take2
Take2
Take2
Midway
Sony
Ubisoft
THQ

Wish List

Three games we want to see come to PSP



1. Soul Calibre PSP

Aside from /Tekken/, Namco is keeping tight-lipped about its PSP plans, however, rumours are rife of everyone's favourite sword 'n' sandals fighter hitting the small screen this Christmas.



2. GTA: Vice City Stories

We've returned to /Liberty City/ and survived, why not make a home coming to /Vice City/? Arguably the most stylish of the new /GTA/s, /Vice City/'s size would sit very comfortably on the PSP.



3. Medal Of Honor

EA won't want to concede ground to rival WWII shooters this year, so it is very likely we'll be seeing a PSP exclusive /Medal Of Honor/ before Christmas. Will it be an FPS or a tactical shooter akin to /Killzone: Liberation/? Only time will tell.



Shelf Talk

Recommended releases

Tomb Raider: Legend Score: 8/10
Street Fighter Alpha 3 Max Score: 8/10
OutRun 2006: Coast 2 Coast Score: 9/10
SOCOM US Navy SEALs Score: 8/10

WE WANT IT

Sony's forthcoming toon-shaded RPG may look similar in style to /Dragon Quest VIII/ but it should be a less intense affair. Based on a new Anime movie being released in Japan in July, /Brave Story/ is

OVERSEAS GAMES WE WANT TO SEE OVER HERE

the tale of a boy gets pulled into an alternate world over-run with monsters. The story is universal enough and the visual look should appeal beyond the Japanese RPG fraternity. This one could make it to the UK.



[PSP PLANNER]

Hot new info on the biggest PSP games coming soon...

EXCLUSIVE
PlayStation Portable

Killzone: Liberation

Publisher: Sony
Developer: Guerrilla Games
Release: September 06

It would have been easy for Sony to knockout a quick conversion of the PS2 game, with a sprinkling of WiFi thrown in to tease. But instead we get a completely new style of game, a new Killzone experience that can only be played on PSP.

The game is an isometric 3D real-time strategy game with a healthy dose of action thrown in. You will have to guide your trooper, Jan Templar from the PS2 version, through numerous stealth missions in a General Metrac.

We've managed to scoop some new screens of the game in action that illustrate just how special this PSP only Killzone is going to be. As you can see from the screens, Liberation will balance traps, melee combat and typically destructive weaponry to deliver a unique game. The developer is picking out the significant ideas from the PS2 shooter and transferring them into a real-time strategy shoot-out. Liberation's formula, with the recently announced Advanced Wars-style strategy.

Given Liberation's switch to strategic combat and Sony's determination to push WiFi gaming, we would expect the game to feature a substantial multiplayer element. Ideally, a Co-op mode should feature in the final game in which you and a friend team-up to take down the Helghast or even compete to secure the most captives.

Also, in light of Sony's commitment to connect titles to PS3 in many of its forthcoming next-gen story, weapons and characters, ensuring yet another reason to play PSP. It's refreshing to see a publisher willing to mess about with its big franchise in order to offer us PSP gamers a fresh adventure.

Gekido

Publisher: TBC
 Developer: NAPS Team
 Release: November 06

This is the latest game from the Italian developer with an obsession for violent '80s side-scrolling beat-'em-ups.

NAPS Team's aim is to recreate the simple but effective controls of classic brawlers like Double Dragon, but set within a Devil May Cry-like 3D world. Gekido has been in development for nearly two years and has always been earmarked as a PSP exclusive release, a game specifically designed to work with the hand-held's unique controls. This should ensure that the 3D combat works smoothly and ideally has a tactical edge lacking in Dante's more recent PS2 hunts. ■

Metal Gear Acid 2

Publisher: Konami
 Developer: Konami
 Release: September 06

Already on sale in Japan and selling 'solidly' Metal Gear Acid 2 is still some way off from a UK release. However, that doesn't stop us getting a hold of code and playing through Kojima's latest masterpiece.

The turn-based strategy works brilliantly on the PSP and is yet another example of an established franchise being reworked for hand-held. This sequel will feature 500 new cards to battle with, as well as new weapon upgrade cards to combine. The new 3D mode is also a weird but effective gimmick. Using the free viewfinder you can watch exclusive trailers and movies in '50s style 3D. Yet another reason to look forward to Acid 2, which should arrive on these shores in September. ■





Tekken: Dark Resurrection

Publisher: Sony
 Developer: Namco
 Release: August 06

Of all the franchise titles coming to PSP, **Tekken: Dark Resurrection** must be one of the most eagerly awaited by hand-held gamers.

On paper, this game has it all: it's the world's first 3D beat-'em-up on a hand-held, it will feature all the fighters and arenas from the Tekken 5 coin-op and it will star two new slugs, Draganov and Lili.

More so, recent news of the game's seven play modes, including Network, Tekken Dojo, Quick Battle, Arcade Battle, (Time) Attack, Story mode and PS2 conversion released last year. A new Theatre mode will also enable you to watch end and intro movies, listen to music and customize your tag.

If the controls can be mapped properly to the PSP, this could be the definitive Tekken. For now, just enjoy the pics we've snagged from Namco. ■

The Getaway: Gangs Of London

Publisher: Sony
 Developer: Sony
 Release: September 06

Following our exclusive first look at **Gangs Of London** in our last issue, we now have a bunch of new screens that reveal more of London's darker side.

Between rounds of thuggery with tracksuit clad, mullet sporting men from the wrong side of the river, you will be able to play games of snooker and darts in the local pubs. The scale of Gangs Of London seems to grow with each month it's in development.

It's quite incredible to imagine that as well as cramming a realistic version of London into the game, complete with strategic AI driven gangland gameplay, Sony has also been able to offer players such detailed mini-games. Much more soon. ■



Capcom Classics Collection Remixed

Publisher: Capcom
Developer: Capcom
Release: June 06

Another game already available overseas, Capcom Classics Collection Remixed is looking like an essential retro collection.

Previewed last issue, this collection features some of Capcom's more mainstream coin-ops from back in the day. There will be 20 retro favourites to play, including Final Fight, Captain Commando, Side Arms, Mega Twins, Forgotten Worlds and Magic Sword. Many of the games will take advantage of the Wii's functionality of PSP to offer Co-op and Versus gameplay. More so, some shooters will also offer different aspect ratios to play them in, either PSP widescreen or the original. Excitingly, some games such as 1941 Kai will be playable in the original vertical format.

Just as we went to press Capcom also announced a second pack, Capcom Classics Collection Reloaded. This will feature Street Fighter II and Knights of the Round amongst other hits. We expect Reloaded to release in November. ■



B-Boy

Publisher: Sony
Developer: FreeStyleGames
Release: September 06

With the likes of FIFA Street and Mark Ecco's Getting Up doing well, street culture, in one for or another, is driving games at the moment.

The latest game to jump on the craze for baggy jeans, break-beats and bling-bling culture is Sony's own B-Boy. This game aims to combine the skills of a beat-em-up with the timing needed for the best rhythm games. All the standard combo-friendly controls will be in here, only now you'll be head spinning and body-popping against rival B-Boy superstars like Crazy Legs, Kameel, Ivan "The Urban Action Figure" Crumbs and Mouse. In total there will be 40 dancers all with unique moves and special combos to master.

Replacing bouts of blood-letting, B-Boy will feature multiplayer 'dance-offs' in which you can battle a friend's moves. The career mode, amusingly called B-Boy Life, will enable you to upgrade and customize your breaker before taking on the world breaking new records and opponents you will wise breaker out to help you look the part of a street dancer.

Handily, you will also be able to discover new combos to use against opponents, from a massive roster of 800 motion captured dance moves. The stats don't end there either. The game will also feature over 40 licensed hip-hop and funk tracks that will be mixed 'on the fly' by the in-game DJs. Amidst all of the urban set games that have been launched at us console owners recently, B-Boy seems surprisingly fresh and innovative. We can't wait to start dancing-off with strangers on the train. You can expect B-Boy to be spinning its way into the next issue of the Official PSP Guidebook. ■

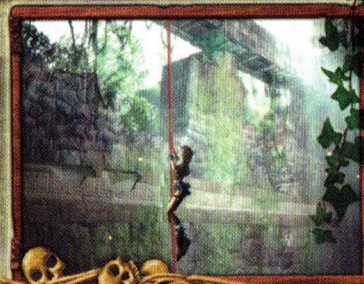
EXCLUSIVE

PlayStation Portable

LARA CROFT TOMB RAIDER

LEGEND

SEEING IS BELIEVING
OUT NOW!



12+

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PSP

eidos

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www.tombraider.com





● Game Name: Power Stone Collection ● Publisher: Capcom ● Developer: Capcom ● Release: September 06 ● Website: www.capcom-europe.com

YOU'VE GOT THE POWER

Enjoy a double dose of arcade magic as a legend finds its spiritual home on PSP

The move was unstoppable. When the PlayStation phenomenon revolutionised the games industry back in the mid '90s, not even the console kingpins of the time could resist Sony's dream machine. Even Sega, and the brilliant Dreamcast, couldn't halt the exodus of developers to the little grey box that birthed a new dynasty that still reigns supreme today – in the form of the PSP.

It's a pity, then, that legendary games such as *Power Stone* (1999) – converted from a Sega arcade machine – and *Power Stone 2* (2000) have been all but forgotten thanks to their affiliation with PlayStation's pummelled rival console.

The original games, which are both included in *Power Stone Collection*, catapulted players into multi-levelled arenas strewn with weapons, and the eponymous Power Stones. If you collected enough of said objects of power your character was temporarily transformed into a kick-ass warrior as you unleashed hell with a variety of devastating special moves.

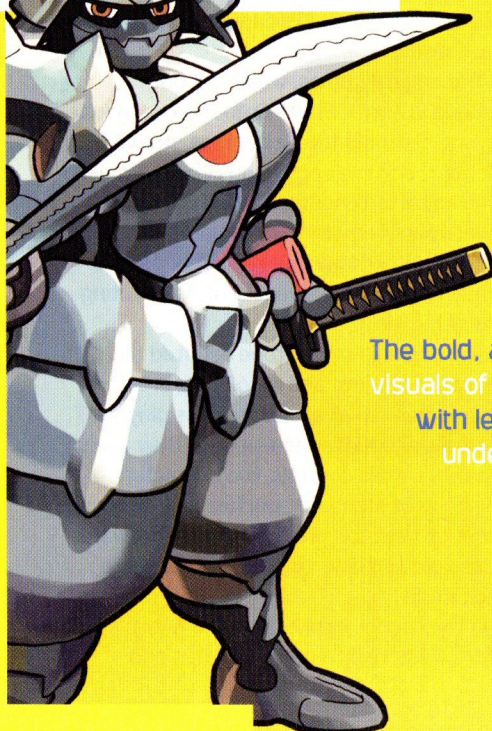
The original *Power Stone* debuted this gameplay dynamic and in so doing created a manic free-for-all atmosphere as players attempted to batter gems out of their rivals. And with simple controls, the characters' repertoire of standard punches and kicks and a host of weapons provided straightforward, accessible and downright brilliant ways to crack skulls.

In the sequel, battles became four-player affairs, with many more power-ups and



LET'S PARTY

Why resurrect a pair of games that were released six or seven years ago? Because *Power Stone* and its sequel were two of the most infectious multiplayer games ever, that's why. Crisp 3D levels, original and distinct characters and a comic book intensity backed-up by brilliant whacking noises as you planted one on your rivals, ensured it was the best way to battle your mates, without ending up with a thick lip. And with PSP's WiFi multiplayer capabilities the action promises to be even more manic.



Collect the power stones to unleash the shock and awe

collectable weapons, based around a series of face-offs that ended in a showdown with an enormous big bad boss character. It was a sequel in the American style – with plenty more of everything.

The only real criticism of *Power Stone 2* was that the frantic four-way battling was sometimes hard to follow on a single split-screen, even if this presentation did fit into the whacked-out vibe of the game. Enter: your sleek, chic PSP.

Power Stone Collection will be playable in Ad Hoc wireless battles with four players – and, best of all, you'll only need one UMD between your quartet of brawlers to get a game on. The hand-held's brilliant WiFi capabilities mean you'll see all the action in one, easy-to-view window – your PSP's sumptuous screen – so you won't be distracted from the task at hand.

The bold, and sometimes downright bizarre, visuals of each game are ramped up for PSP, with levels set on flying ships, underground caverns and more

To say the *Power Stone* pair have been tweaked for PSP would be like suggesting that it hurts a little when you stub your toe – a bit of an understatement.

No feature has been left out in these new reiterations, which capture the spirit of the original duo perfectly. For starters, the fully

interactive environments of each game can still be smashed and manipulated creatively to ensure that even the scenery is a weapon in this pair of all-out gaming brawlers.

With dynamic environments that threaten to kill any unfocused combatants, even an act as simple as spinning on a pole to gain momentum as you dive toward an oncoming enemy might give you a vital edge. Hell, why not just yank the pole out of the ground and start battering your rivals with it instead? In *Power Stone Collection*, you can.

SO POWERFUL

Another novel feature in the PSP version is that as you bid to grab three or more Power Stones, you'll be able to use the extra characters from *Power Stone 2* in the first game. Further enhancements for the PSP include a fresh interface that updates the game's presentation and, more importantly, a horizontal health bar which is far easier to pick out against the furious backdrop you'll see during the manic match-ups.

Locating Power Stones will now be easier than ever thanks to a special PSP radar. Using this will ensure you effect a vital character transformation more quickly than in the original versions of the game.

To sum this all up, extra layers of brilliance have been added to a series that has already made great leaps between the first and second games. In the old *Power Stone 2* the action was ramped up thanks not only to new four-player battles, but also the multi-tiered gaming environments that opened up the fights even more.

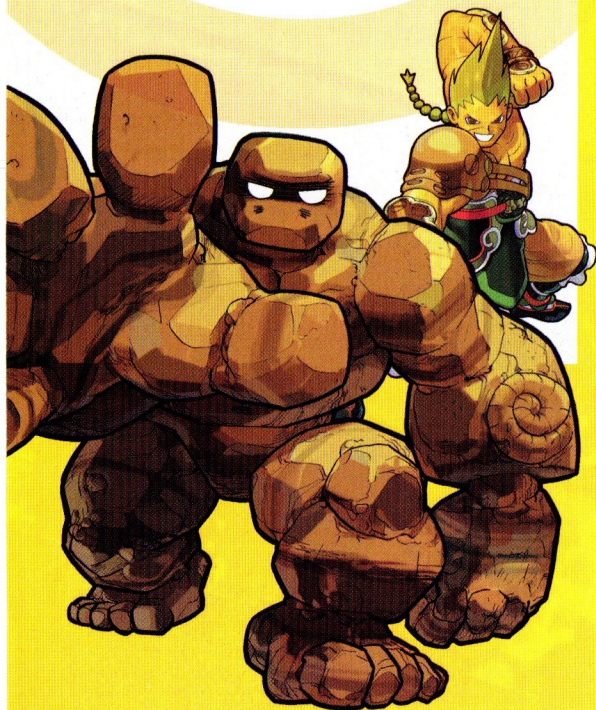
Power Stone 2 featured some nifty new modes that added some spice to the proceedings. Basic and arcade games provided two and four fighter single-player action and an original mode which featured customisable battles that let you pit one player against three, two against two or enabled you to set up tag matches.

All these modes return. As does the RPG-style mode, adventure, in which players



BOMBING AROUND

The Bomber Battle mini-game, which never made it into the Dreamcast version, will feature as an explosive extra in *Power Stone Collection*. In it players must negotiate a level strewn with bombs, avoiding the devices while they try to mash their rivals – not an easy task. The mode adds another layer of insanity to a game of destructible, decaying levels and merciless combat.



collect items and gold to spend on creating weapons and objects, which can then be used in all the other game modes.

What's more, a ton of smart new-for-PSP weapons have yet to be revealed – we can't wait to see what devices have been dreamed up by the minds behind two of the greatest fighting games of all time...

STONE ME

The improvements don't stop there, either – the bold, and sometimes downright bizarre visuals of each game are ramped up for the PSP with deteriorating levels set on flying ships and underground caverns, and everywhere in between.

The trademark repertoire of weapons returns too. Rocket-launchers, flame-



Take on and beat your mates using the PSP's WiFi capabilities – who's the best now, then?

throwers, all manner of blades and even comedy giant sledgehammers will be on hand as you batter your rivals to hell. And, true to form, there will be a raft of unlockables, secret levels and collectable extras to keep you playing, even if your WiFi rivals have given up the ghost.

But why would they? This game tore up the rule book for fighters, moving from a pretty much 2D fighting system, or 2.5D if you count the character circling in the likes of *Tekken*, to a fully 3D environment.

Hurling tables at your opponents and collecting gems to power-up and unleash formidable super attacks might not sound revolutionary now, but it looks like *Power Stone* will retain its innovative feel by translating such action to the greatest hand-held gaming device ever. Best of all, because *Power Stone Collection* is at heart an arcade game, it's blessed with immediacy and pace. It's shaping up to be about as addictive as sweetly, sugary berry-flavoured Pez.

Even in single-player mode you'll line-up against PSP opponents who promise to be no pushovers – making the solo-game as addictive and challenging to play as it is with friends. Plus, an unlimited restart system means you'll be straight back into the action.

And, believe us, once you've sampled the *Power Stone* experience, you'll never want to leave the fight. ■



YOU'RE ON CAMERA

The *Power Stone* cameras have been redesigned for PSP in widescreen, with zoomed-in and -out options that enable you to enjoy the carnage with an unobstructed view. You'll be able to flick through the camera angles with a quick button press, so you won't lose sight of your character during the constantly hectic battles.

Best of all, a screenshot mode will enable you to use the new camera to capture images of your humbled mates as you pull off a particularly devastating attack...



The PSP is ideal for playing *Power Stone* and instantly does away with split-screen problems

PREVIEWS

The days of hand-held gaming taking the backseat to the full console experience are over. For the first time we have a console in the palm of our hands and the upcoming games line-up proves it. With franchise games rubbing shoulders with retro rivals and cute original platformers mixing with throat-gouging 3D beat-'em-ups, the PSP has every angle covered. The likes of *2006 FIFA World Cup Germany*, *Ultimate Ghouls 'n' Ghosts*, *Loco Roco* and *Mortal Kombat: Unleashed* will be blurring the line between hand-held and home console gaming in the coming months. ■

MORTAL KOMBAT: UNLEASHED



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MICRO MACHINES

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MONKEY BALL ADVENTURE

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RENGOKU 2:
STAIRWAY TO H.E.A.V.E.N

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WORLD TOUR SOCCER 2

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LEGO STAR WARS II:
THE ORIGINAL TRILOGY

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LOCO ROCO

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ULTIMATE
GHOSTS 'N' GOBLINS

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2006 FIFA WORLD CUP
GERMANY

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RUSH

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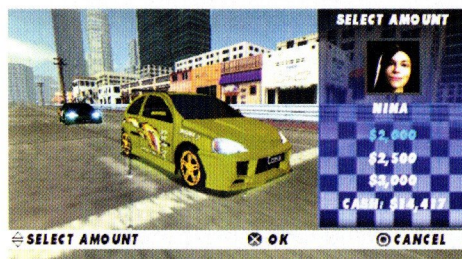
Having Daisy Duke sat in the back was a clear disadvantage

Juiced: Eliminator

A PSP racer with added vitamins



● Genre: Racing ● Publisher: THQ
● Developer: Juice Games ● Release: June 06
● Website: www.thq.com



Place bets at the start of every race to boost earnings

Two new WiFi modes will be packed into PSP *Juiced*. Will you help rivals in Relay mode or dash their hopes of a win in the tightly fought Eliminator game?

The original *Juiced* on PS2 was a confused bag. There were bits of *Need For Speed: Underground*, nods to *Ridge Racer* and a smidge of Microsoft's *Project Gotham Racing*. Which is why this PSP edition is so promising, because everything is being stripped back and rebalanced.

At the heart of the *Juiced* PSP modification are a couple of new online game modes: the Eliminator race, in which the last man gets sent from the circuit, and Relay, where you and friends race as a team to win. You'll even be able to bet your cars' pink slips over these WiFi races.

On PSP, *Juiced: Eliminator* plays better than its PS2 cousin. The handling, even with the PSP nub, is smoother and avoids the over- and under-steer problems that plagued the original. The PSP version also features two new locations with eight routes, bringing the game's quota to

almost 100 tracks. These tracks feel tighter than before, in fact from a play of the preview code *Eliminator* feels more like a streetwise *Ridge Racer* than a pimped out *Need For Speed*.

This feeling is carried through into the PSP visuals. The cars are still bright, bling-machines, but the tracks are littered with the kind of detail seen in Namco's arcade racer – air balloons float above the tracks, sunsets and rain sweep the circuits and the choice of locations (beaches, cliff roads and underpasses) feel more like the Japanese racer than EA's American muscle.

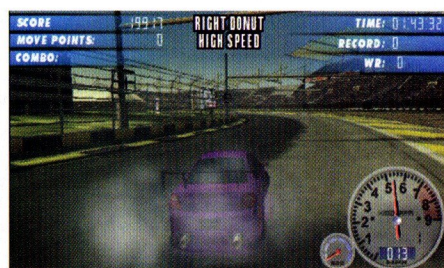
This racer's revamp, however, is most obvious in the career mode. The menus and respect system have been streamlined and the calendar view has been reduced to suit the PSP's wide screen. Skipping through events, you can dip in and out of races, drag events and one-on-one challenges with rival gangs.

Who you can and can't race against is again down to the amount of respect points you've accrued. You earn respect from rival racers, not just by winning races, but by driving with style, taking a big lead, drifting around bends and completing perfect laps. On PSP, knowing who is available to race is easy – they'll roll up and speak to you in new FMV sequences after the races.

Though there are plenty of rival racers on the PSP we're quite excited about *Juiced: Eliminator*. The game is being tuned into a smoother racing experience, with online play central to the thrill of the chase – a first for hand-held gaming. We'll have an in-depth review next issue. ■



Drive in a typical city – with multi-storey buildings and explosions (eh?)



You'll need the Stig's skills to do well in this game



PSP's *Juiced: Eliminator* lets you personalise your own ride, race friends and rival gangs through a variety of detailed landscapes, and show off your race skills

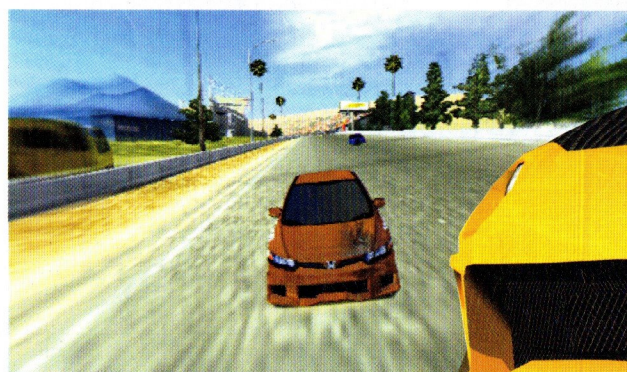


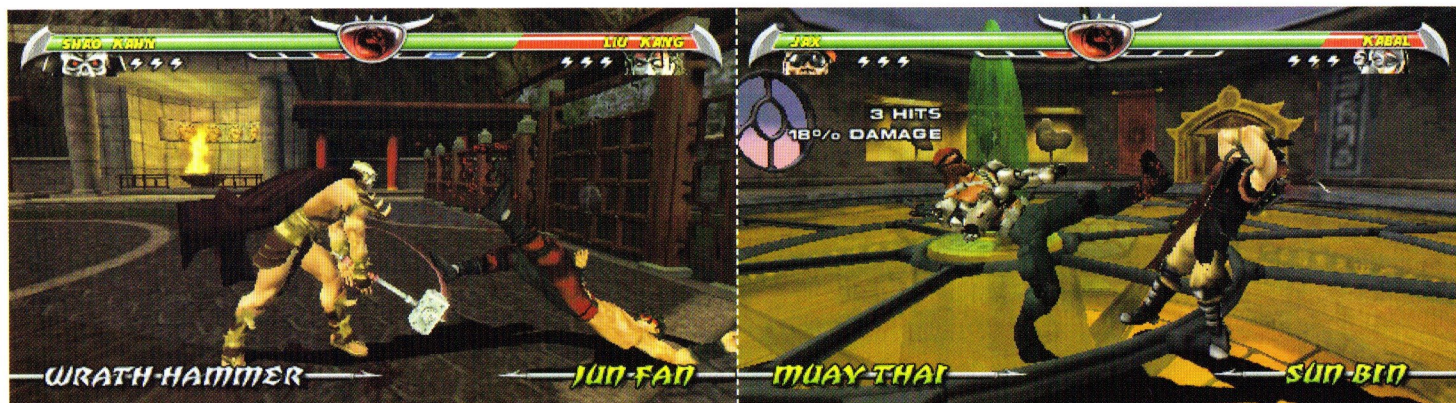
CAR COLLECTOR

Along with an overhaul of the game's new tracks and career mode, *Juiced: Eliminator* will also feature eight new cars to tune and race.

The roster of showroom beauties will include the 2005 Ford Mustang GT, Toyota Scion TC and Renault Megane Sport. Each car will feature a garage of upgrades and body kits, some available from the start of the game. In all, there will be over 100 body kits to pick from, so even the most picky car pimp will be satisfied.

Once again, designing the perfect car is simple and takes seconds to finish. Just adjust the colour scheme, flick through the unlocked parts and kits, then take your creation for a test drive. Make sure you tune the performance though – *Juiced* on PSP is more about racing than showing off





Mortal Kombat: Unchained

Punching above its weight

● **Genre:** Beat-'em-up ● **Publisher:** Midway
 ● **Developer:** Midway ● **Release:** October 06
 ● **Website:** www.midway.com

Packed with PSP exclusive features, this could be the definitive edition to *Mortal Kombat*.

There was a time during which the PSP was becoming a console bereft of its own identity. It was forced to make do with hand-me-down conversions from the PS2. However, Sony's little marvel is fast becoming home to a number of exclusive must-play editions of famous franchises, and *Mortal Kombat: Unchained* is no exception.

Though gameplay will remain as brutally tasteless as the fully-fledged version of Midway's beat-'em-up series, hand-held *Mortal Kombat* has a bunch of modes and bonuses in store that will only be available on the palm-sized PSP. Six new characters, including series favourites Jax, Goro and Shao Kahn, will be exclusive to PSP *Mortal Kombat*. Likewise, the new Endurance mode, which demands players climb the *Mortal Kombat* ranks on one health bar, in a similar way to *DarkStalker's* Chaos Tower mode, will only be an option on PSP.

Exclusive features aside, fans of *Mortal Kombat: Deception* will remember the series sunk its blood-stained teeth into other game

styles, with the *Mortal Kombat* themed chess and puzzle fighter quickly becoming hits with fans, especially in the online community.

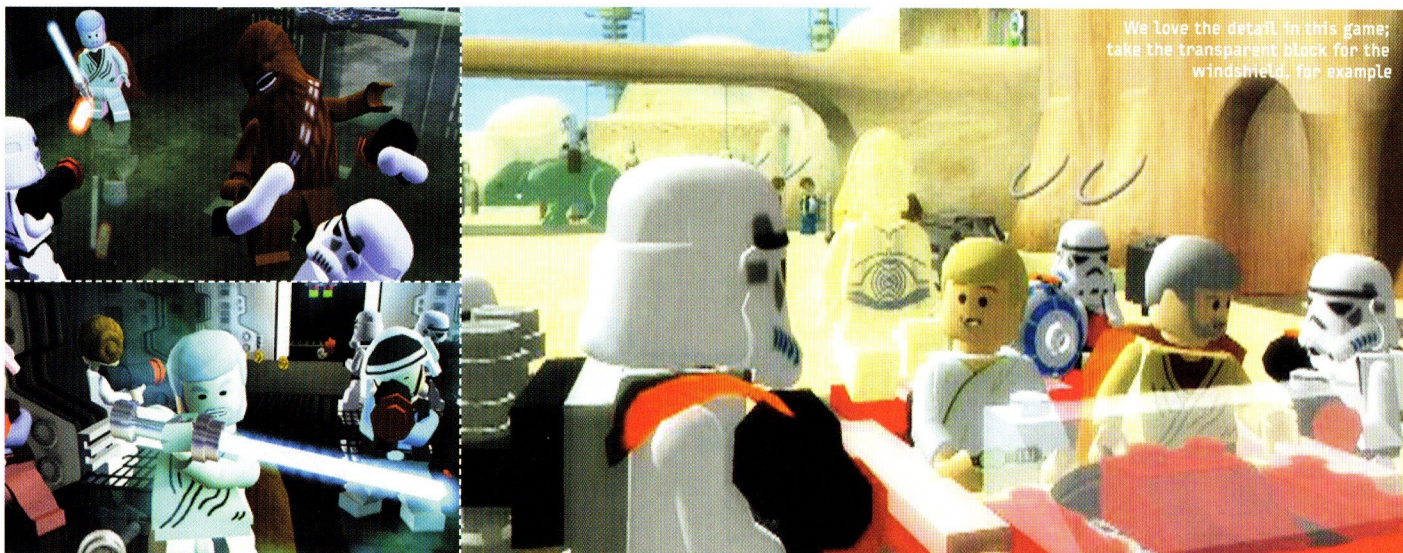
These mini-games will return in *Mortal Kombat: Unchained*, along with the popular Konquest mode, which is a single-player adventure set in the *Mortal Kombat* universe.

However, once the gimmicks run their course it will be the classic *Mortal Kombat* gameplay that should prove fun. The trademark fatality moves so popular with MK fans (pull spines and gouge eyes) are back, as are the equally gruesome multi-tiered arenas. It promises the same intensity that has helped to make the entire *Mortal Kombat* franchise so popular.

With a PSP exclusive *Tekken* waiting in the wings, also likely to be released in the autumn, and now a standalone edition of America's most controversial beat-'em-up, you'll forgive us PSP gamers for feeling a bit smug about things when the autumn comes. It appears that the PS2's little brother is growing up. ■



The trademark fatality moves so loved by *Mortal Kombat* fans return in *Unchained*, while there are also some changes, such as the addition of six new characters exclusive to the PSP version of the game

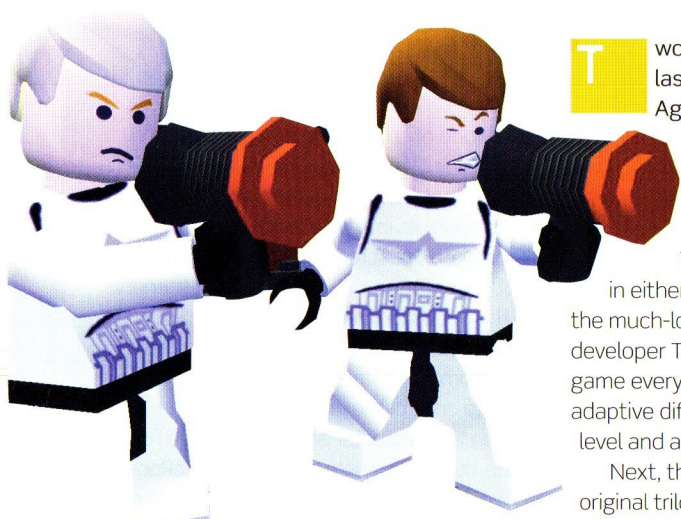


We love the detail in this game; take the transparent block for the windshield, for example

Lego Star Wars II: The Original Trilogy

Impressive, most impressive, even with the Lego Ewoks

● **Genre:** Adventure ● **Publisher:** Activision
● **Developer:** Traveller's Tales ● **Release:** September 06
● **Website:** www.lucasarts.com



Two of the biggest franchises collided last year to produce *Lego Star Wars*. Against all the odds, this turned out to be a fun romp through Lucas's imagination, albeit in the form of bright yellow plastic.

Thankfully, *Lego Star Wars II: The Original Trilogy* isn't a lame cash-in either, and avoids some of the mistakes the much-loved original made. First up, developer Traveller's Tales is aiming to create a game everyone will find challenging. A new adaptive difficulty setting will judge your skill level and adjust accordingly.

Next, the game will throw you into the original trilogy world. This means there will be



R2-D2 looks the same then; still a plastic bin

some spectacular set-piece events, such as a Lego version of the Death Star trench run. Along with Obi Wan, Luke and Han Solo, you will also be able to control Darth Vader and the Emperor. Each character will have their signature moves from the movies: Vader will choke opponents and Luke will whine a lot.

Customisation will play a greater role in this sequel, too. This virtual Lego box will enable you to snap pieces together to create new characters and vehicles, and then add them into the *Star Wars* universe to play with.

Like last year's game there seems to be a real sense of pride about *Lego Star Wars II*. We sense good things from this one. ■



COLLECT ALL THE CHARACTERS

A large part of the enjoyment from playing the original *Lego Star Wars* came from collecting all the characters from the films, including the weird background bods that only hardcore fanboys were aware of.

With more than 50 characters from the original movies, we can't wait to start collecting again. The new game will feature a roster of well-known peeps in various costumes (Lego Tatooine Leia) as well as creatures from the universe. We can't wait to find the Lego version of Greedo.



Buzzumm, Bazzimm... "You're not my father, you're chunky piece of plastic!"

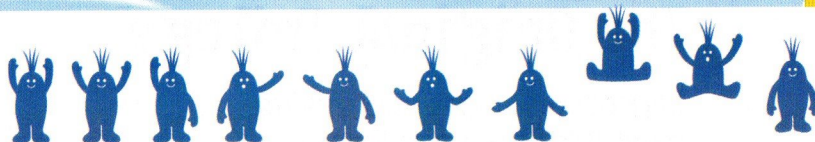


The palm-sized fit of the PSP is perfect for *LocoRoco's* tilting style of gameplay. you can't help but lean with every roll and jump



LocoRoco

Bouncing to a totally different tune



● **Genre:** Platform ● **Publisher:** Sony
● **Developer:** Sony ● **Release:** June 06
● **Website:** www.yourpsp.com



Split yourself into smaller clones and then take a ride on a swirl of confetti... what will they think of next?

Have you ever dabbled in the murky world of online gaming forums? If so, you will often hear Sony being lambasted for never innovating. When magazine teams aren't being harassed over review scores, Sony often gets it in the neck.

Well, these ill-informed rants will have to cease for good with the summer release of *LocoRoco*. This is one of those rare games that turn up in the early days of a console's lifespan and are often overlooked. So listen up, because *LocoRoco* is a rubbery ball of quirky goodness.

The game is simple enough: guide the jelly-like LocoRoco creature through an increasingly

complex world of spiked plants, fluted caverns and trampoline-like flowers. The game's unique physics-led control mechanism is where *LocoRoco* bounces into new territory. The L and R buttons pitch the screen up and down, making the flubbery creature roll with the tilting scenery. Hitting the opposite direction makes him jump, thus avoiding those nasty thistles and spikes.

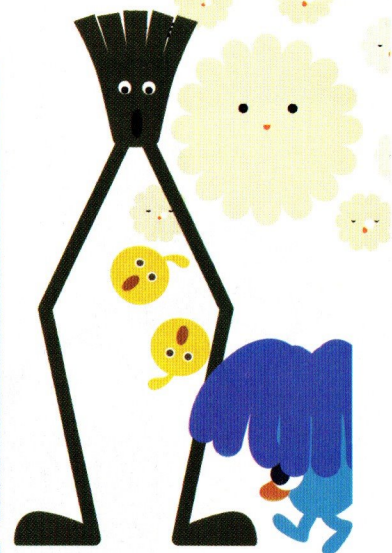
It's platforming, sure, but the control method and need to control the gravity of the game rather than the character adds a challenge few such cute titles can muster. Plus, the LocoRoco creature itself is full of squeaky, squelchy charm. Every bump and jump is greeted with a squeal of delight that will make you smile.

The game also has a surprising level of depth. The controls allow for increasing degrees of experimentation, not least because you can split your LocoRoco into mini-creatures. Tapping  splits and splits again the jelly-like ball in order to fit down small tube-like caves that lead to secret rooms. Also, splitting LocoRoco divides its weight, which is often needed to press on switches to open new caverns. Eating flowers grows the LocoRoco and thus makes it heavier, ideal for a bit of risk/reward rambling as better players will grow a heavier creature and open up more of the game.

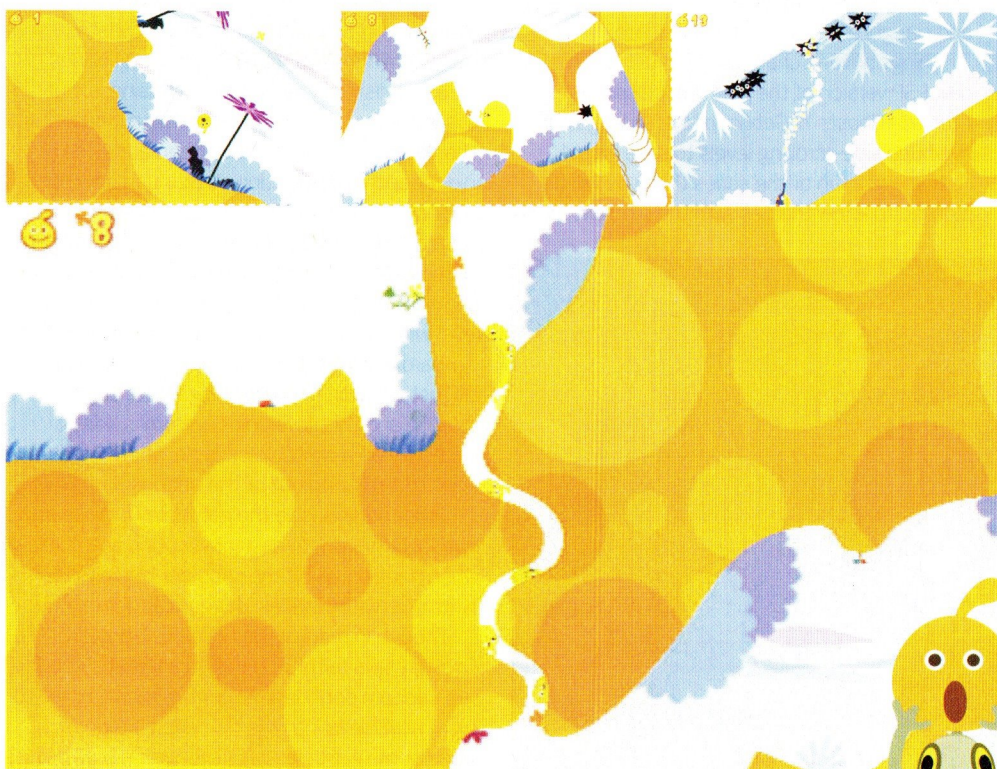
Sounds innovative, right? Well, it is, and Sony should feel very pleased that the PSP is home to such a neat little title that mixes *Sonic* with *Marble Madness* and advanced physics trickery. At least it should keep the forums quiet for a day or two and give Sony the respect it deserves. ■



This U-bend looks like a particularly painful piece of scenery to exit (top left)



A selection of the bizarre but cute characters you'll meet (above). The surreal landscapes are as original as the game's innovative method of controlling the environment around the LocoRoco character (left)



You'll need to split your LocoRoco creature into smaller versions of itself to fit through narrow passageways. This introduces a tricky puzzle element to the game

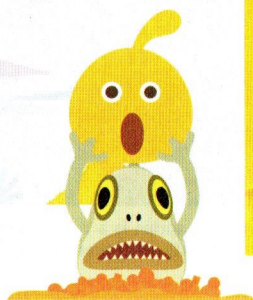


BOUNCING THE LINE

The whole gravity gameplay control method of *LocoRoco* runs the fine line between gimmick and innovation, coming down on the latter through sheer cuteness charm and a balanced learning curve.

The initial levels are very direct; bounce to the next loop or jump and chomp down on the flowers and push buttons to access new areas. But get deeper into the game and you'll discover a strong puzzle element lurks beneath. You'll need to balance the weight of your LocoRoco as much as time the tilts.

Learning to split the creature for weight puzzles to squidge through into new rooms and locations is a must. The little rubbery creature makes cute noises too every time it divides, crossing the line back into the gimmick zone.





Despite now featuring restart and save points, *Ultimate Ghosts 'n' Goblins* is as hair-pullingly tricky as past editions.

Ghosts 'n' Goblins is well known for its taxing boss battles and this update looks to revel in this facet of the series, with some boss creatures so big they can't fit on the screen!

PSP BONUS

The forthcoming *Capcom Collection Remix* features a bonus trailer for *Ultimate Ghosts 'n' Goblins*



Ultimate Ghosts 'n' Goblins

Nearly 20 years older and Arthur is still chasing Princesses

● Genre: Platform ● Publisher: Capcom
● Developer: Capcom ● Release: June
● Website: www.capcom-europe.com



The combination of 2D style and 3D wizardry brings Arthur's new demonic world to life

Capcom's Knight Arthur must be one of the most unlucky videogame heroes around. Whether it's in the original 1985 *Ghosts 'n' Goblins* or the various remakes that appeared on the SNES and MegaDrive the poor lad was always struggling to rescue his princess and slaughter half of Hell to get there.

Things haven't changed too much on this new PSP version of the platform classic, as *Ultimate Ghosts 'n' Goblins* pits Arthur against five huge side-scrolling levels to save his girl.

If you're a fan of the series then you will be pleased to know that, as with the plot, not much

is changing. This new game is being directed by the series' creator Tokuro Fujiw and as such is being imbued with all the style and humour that made the originals such hits. When Arthur falls into a cauldron he will once again turn into a duck or frog and comically waddle and hop into a demon's claws, with his inevitable death transforming Arthur to a pile of crusty bones.

So, stylistically we're back in business, but this is 2006 and we want some fresh ideas. Thankfully, new moves have been added to inject depth to the action. Arthur can now dash and hang from ledges if your jump was poorly judged, immediately suggesting this PSP update will be less frustrating than the original. Also, you can now restart where you died and save mid-level whenever you wish. Amidst the sound of die-hard retro gamers thumping their fat fists in disgust, it's worth noting the game is still a toughie and this save point system is likely a necessity on a portable console where you'll want to dip in and out of the action.

Other additions to the gameplay include an inventory system to assign weapons and shields when needed, using the shoulder buttons to switch between lances, daggers and axes.

Though in many ways *Ultimate Ghosts 'n' Goblins* stays faithful to the originals, it's good to see Capcom confident enough in its franchise to inject new ideas into the mix, even if it does mean some retrofiles will have their noses put out of joint. Us? We can't wait to see if Arthur can finally keep his missus out of trouble. ■



Arthur's handy new ledge grab move suggests that the action is a little less pixel-perfect than before, which could save you from smashing your new PSP into the wall every time the Game Over screen appears.



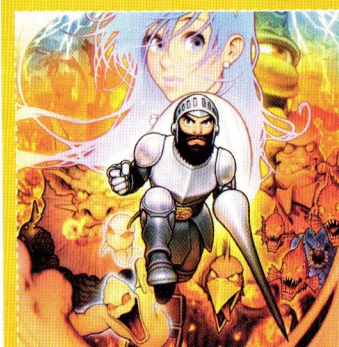
A number of magic spells can be accessed in the inventory screen, including Time Magic that acts as bullet time and Inferno Magic (above) used to toast Arthur's enemies.



ONE TO WATCH
PlayStation Portable



Arthur's new armour enables him to shoot different weapons. The Samurai outfit sees our legendary hero hurling scythes (left), while the classic European armour offers Arthur a three-bolt crossbow (bottom left). Then of course, get hit and Arthur does battle in his undies (below).



THE NEXT LEVEL

Though the game spans five themed stages there will be room to explore within the confines of wandering from left to right. Spend a little time poking around a stage will reveal sub-levels, hidden rooms and bonus battles to fight through in order to unlock new armour types and permanent abilities. Arthur will be able to upgrade from single to double jumps and even gain the gift of flight. The handy part here is that secret warp spots will enable Arthur to jump back to previous stages and use his new abilities to reach once unattainable areas of the map.

With sweeping stadium fly-ins and a full virtual tour of the host nation, *2006 FWCG* doesn't hold back in terms of atmosphere. You'll really feel a buzz if you lift the trophy



You'll notice that some players have their signature moves

2006 FIFA World Cup Germany

Football's coming home, in your back pocket

● Genre: Sports ● Publisher: EA Sports
● Developer: EA Canada ● Release: Out Now
● Website: www.easports.com

Nobody does the bright lights, global stars, pomp and ceremony of the planet's most enthralling sporting competition better than EA, long-time holder of the golden World Cup licence. So, it's no surprise that we're dancing like a scantily-clad samba beauty over the prospect of lifting the solid gold statuette on PSP. Especially as it looks as if your hand-held bag of tricks and the biggest festival of football on Earth will make a striking partnership.

For starters, you can choose to play as one of 127 national sides and take your team from the first qualifying match right up to the final in

Berlin's rejuvenated Olympiastadion. In fact, all 12 World Cup venues are present and correct – as you'd expect – and you'll even be able to enjoy (or suffer) the national anthems of all 127 nations as EA even goes to great lengths to put on the customary pre-match glitz. And it doesn't end there. With sweeping stadium fly-ins, created with some help from the geeks at NASA, and a full virtual tour of the host nation, *2006 FWCG* doesn't hold back in terms of atmosphere – you'll really feel a buzz if you lift the trophy.

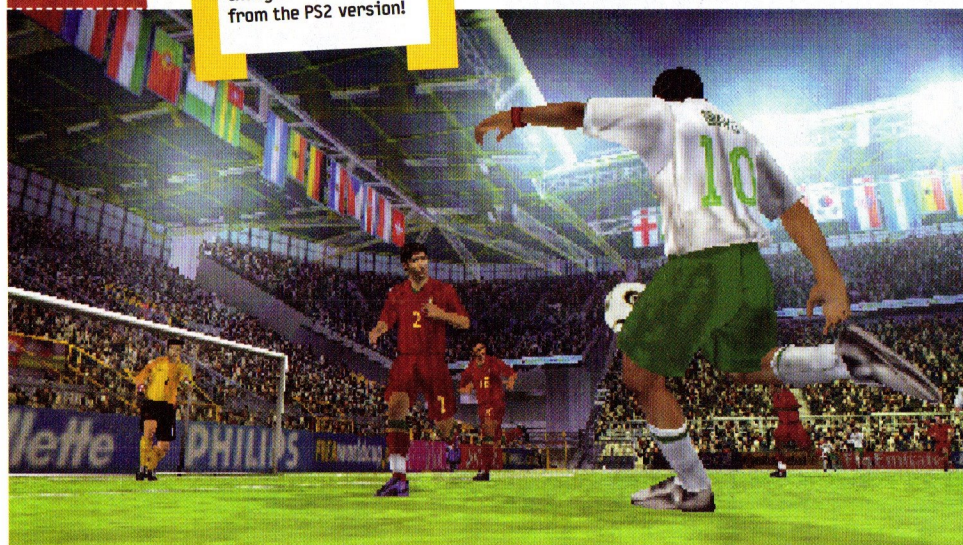
After such a dazzling build-up, the lovingly recreated arenas would seem rather empty without a cast of gladiators to cross footballing swords in the name of international rivalry. Enter EA's cast of world stars. The top 100 players in the world have been singled out here for special treatment when it comes to realism, and we're not just talking about capturing Beckham's latest 'do'. Everything from Ronaldo's step-overs to the England captain's trademark angled free-kick approach is present and gloriously correct in a game that is better presented than Jose Mourinho in a credit card ad.

Rip off the game's snazzy *2006 FWCG* footy shirt and you'll find the *FIFA 06* engine, only with some crucial tactical tweaks. The shooting, for starters, has been hauled off the pitch for a half-time rollicking and sent back into play with factors such as striking ability, opponent pressure and distance from goal affecting shot outcome – about time, too.

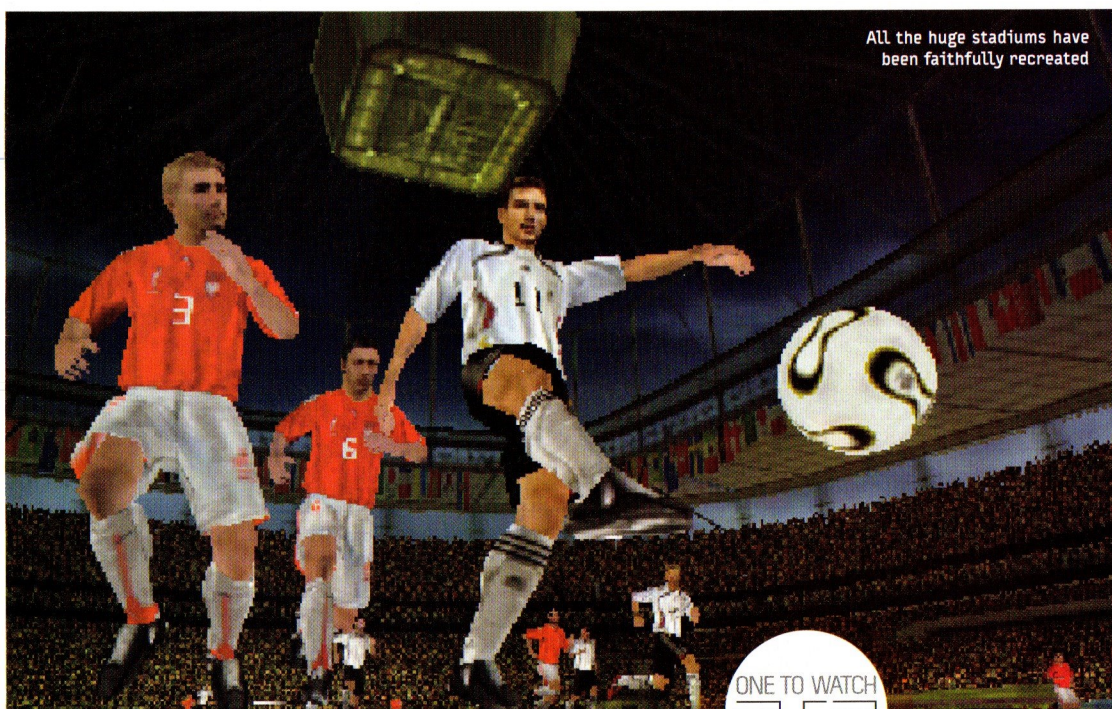
That old English nemesis, the penalty shoot-out, has also been given a makeover, with

PSP BONUS

EA has managed to cram in everything that you would expect from the PS2 version!

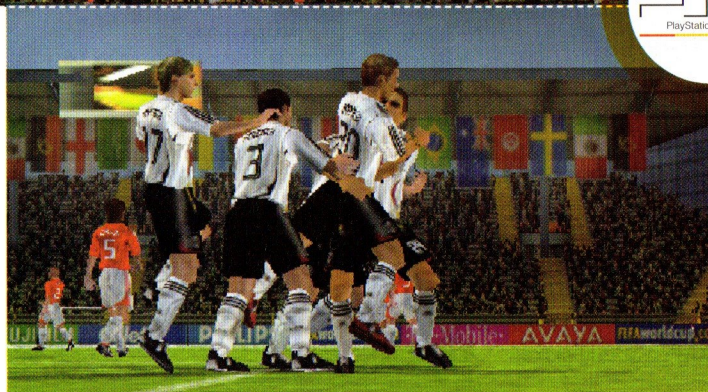


Just because FIFA World Cup is on a hand-held doesn't mean EA will be scrimping on the player detail



All the huge stadiums have been faithfully recreated

ONE TO WATCH
PlayStation Portable



players able to use moves to distract the goalkeeper or put off the kick-taker. No word on whether Bruce Grobbelaar's classic 'wobbly-legs' manoeuvre is unlockable...

Luckily, 2006 FWCG is more than a simple re-jigging of FIFA with national shirts on. You can recreate 40 classic World Cup moments using modern-day teams in the Global Challenge mode. Also, unlockables should keep you busy when your team of choice is dumped

unceremoniously out of the Cup proper. And, of course, you can always indulge in some multiplayer gaming, with up to four players per match, thanks to your PSP's WiFi capabilities. Great if you bump into PSP-loving Germans.

So, if you're desperate to get as close to the World Cup as possible this summer, our advice is to stow away in a sausage lorry bound for Frankfurt and take this slice of fantastic PSP footy action with you. ■



The defender on the left is about to be in a whole world of pain



GOLDEN OLDIES

Recreating games from the past in the Global Challenge mode promises to be fun in itself, but there's an added incentive to get stuck in.

Successfully negotiate each scenario and you'll be rewarded with classic players to add to your roster, and even retro kits to thumb through. Baggy Geoff Hurst in an England '66 shirt...

© 1974 FIFA TM



PSP BONUS

This new hand-held conversion features the same packed LA as you'd find on the PS2!



This cliff jump (Left) looks like it will rival anything *GTA* has to offer

Rush

Midway opens up the Los Angeles freeways for some serious pimping

● Genre: Racing ● Publisher: Midway
● Developer: Midway ● Release: September 06
● Website: www.midway.com



Freedom is the name of the game, but we didn't expect to be able to fly as well

For a game that revels in the modding lifestyle of West Coast Customs' cars and decals, it's only fitting that the PSP edition of *Rush* should take the scene's freedom of expression to heart. Midway's new racer is based on the solid *LA Rush* which was released last year, only now with added extras to entice your cash.

Before we dig deeper into the finer points of the PSP-only features, it's worth noting that the LA recreated for the PS2 version has been crammed into the Sony's hand-held. Once again, the story mode enables you to drive anywhere in an open city. This game is about freedom, so whether you choose to race in the back alleys of South Central or tour the streets of Santa Monica, you won't notice any long loading times.

The PSP-exclusive features are based on *Rush*'s sandbox style of play. The most immediate of the new modes is the Stunt Arena,

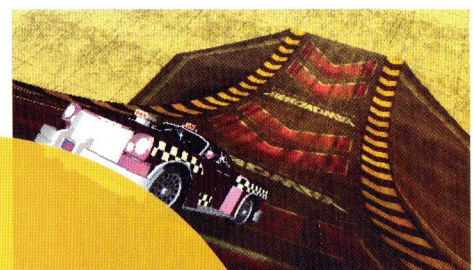


The Stunt Arena looks set to take things to a suitably ridiculous level of car-defying physics

which presents large ramps, loops and jumps that demand to be raced. The PSP's WiFi capability is also called upon, enabling you to go bumper to bumper with a friend in the Battle Race mode and the co-op friendly Cruise mode.

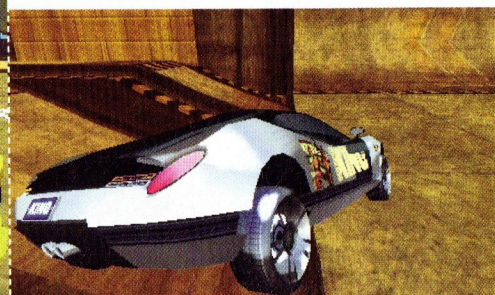
The story mode from the PS2 version returns and once again the aim is to get your cars back from the city's rival gangs. This is done via a number of ways; stealing, winning or trashing a rival's pimped-out ride. Freedom is the name of this game and so how, who and where you race is pretty much down to you.

The multiplayer aspect to this racer along with new game modes, missions and cars unique to the PSP version suggest *Rush* is getting a wholesale modding. ■



Time to look for some back-alley street races

West Coast Customs make a blinging return in the PSP edition of *Rush*. Offering unique ways to pimp-out the game's 50 licensed cars



The car models will look awesome on the PSP screen

It's war!

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Lampard scoring against Brazil, we can but wish

World Tour Soccer 2

Sony's player on the bench warms up

● Genre: Sports ● Publisher: Sony
● Developer: Sony ● Release: June 06
● Website: www.yourpsp.com

Sony plans on rolling out a number of exclusive *WTS2* downloads over the summer, including new challenge modes

They call it the beautiful game, but the original *World Tour Soccer* wasn't the prettiest of debutants. Some iffy ball-glued-to-feet physics and AI that would make Titus Bramble look good stuffed the game up for many PSP gamers.

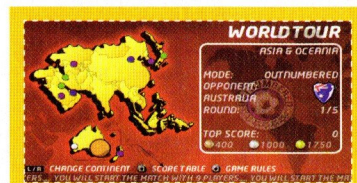
With that said, the original's challenge mode did spark interest in players willing to overlook the countless faults. This mode enabled footie lovers to tour the globe earning points for good passes, creative play and shots on target, and awarded medals for big scores. It's here that *World Tour Soccer 2* aims to impress. There will now be 11 challenge modes to play in, so, including the original mode, you will now get to play Time Attack (gain points against the clock), All Rounder (become the ultimate midfielder) and Shot Clock (score as many goals as quickly as possible). In this respect then, *WTS2* should improve on the original and offer a unique PSP football experience.

Everything else seems to be business as usual for the series. The same tournament and multiplayer modes will be on offer, with four-player matches being available via WiFi. A roster of 71 teams will be on the books and eight new stadiums should offer a little extra variety. We'd like to think the AI issues and poor physics will be tinkered with for this new edition, too.

It does seem though, that Sony knows what this series has succeeded and failed at, and is aiming to build on the successful areas of the gameplay for now. For example, those 11 challenge modes on offer on release will be backed by further new modes to download via the game's website. This sequel, then, may not be the best looker on the park but it should put in a strong challenge. ■



Team USA have finally mastered the game of "sac-cen"



AWAY SUPPORT

While *FIFA* and *PES* attempt to port their respective career modes to the PSP, Sony's own *WTS* series has focused on the dip-in-and-out nature of hand-held gaming.

The series' challenge modes will be back with a passion and are geared for short-burst gaming. You'll be able to pick-up *WTS2* and within seconds be racking up the points tallies. Modes such as Outnumbered offer a unique take on the football experience, as you'll start the game down a man or two and still need to win. Hopefully, the planned use of the game's website to offer new game downloads will also enable players to upload high-scores.



After major surgery, *Rengoku 2* may actually be worth checking out



Rengoku 2: The Stairway To H.E.A.V.E.N

That second step can be tricky

● Genre: RPG ● Publisher: tbc
● Developer: Hudson Soft/Never-Land
● Release: tbc ● Website: www.hudson.co.jp



I-ROBOT, KILL-U

Despite all of its flaws the original *Rengoku* did have a deep custom weapons system. You were able to develop an incredibly freaky android with missile launchers and hammer for arms and hands, and in one case a giant drill for a head. The thought of this depth of construction in a WiFi deathmatch mode is very exciting, heavenly even.

The original held so much promise. It looked good, was laden with novel ideas and had an incredibly preposterous story, in which your robot had to scale the heights of Dante's tower to escape purgatory, which in this case was a televised mechanical bloodbath - Robot idol, anyone? Unfortunately, it played like a dog.

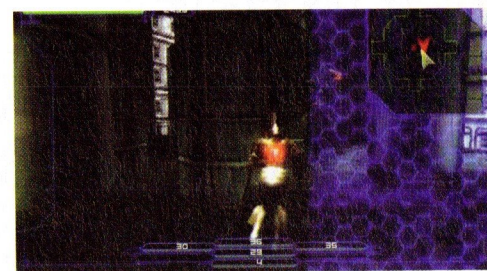
This sequel, *Rengoku 2: The Stairway To H.E.A.V.E.N*, has had a major overhaul. Many of the criticisms levied at the original, which sold quite well to an RPG-starved PSP public, have been listened to and acted on. The biggest complaint was with the control system: *Rengoku's* action/RPG gameplay failed to impress as it only used the PSP's limited D-pad for movement. The analogue nub is favoured for the sequel, though, offering full 360° control

and ensuring the mix of melee and projectile combat is both faster and smoother. With this in mind, it's also welcome news that the game will offer two- to four-player WiFi combat.

The map structure has been revamped, too. The original's basic layouts were devoid of any detail and have been replaced by more complex levels, littered with explodable pillars and walls. You'll notice that the new environments have also been given an anime makeover.

This sequel promises to be glossier, bolder and bigger, with larger character models and new lighting techniques lifting the game away from the drab corridor set stages of the original. The new look, WiFi match-ups and more inventive level design will complement the customization options, the only element of the original adventure that has made it into this sequel. Tailoring your android and taking it into multiplayer deathmatches should offer the thrills the first game lacked.

Thankfully, someone at Hudson seems to have listened to the rattle of complaints that hit the developer after the original *Rengoku* launched. The result is a sequel that promises a lot more. ■





PSP BONUS

The PSP version of the game will feature exclusive multiplayer WiFi modes!

Super Monkey Ball Adventure

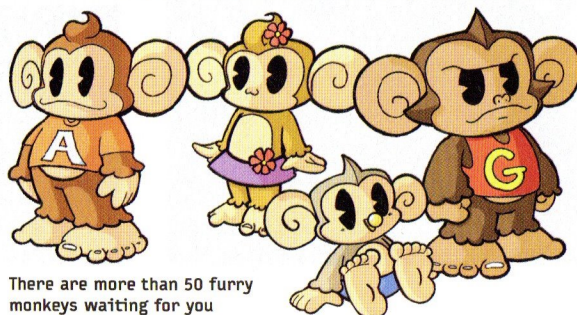
Sega reinvents the, erm, ball and moves the monkeys into the realm of platform adventuring

● **Genre:** Platform ● **Publisher:** Sega
● **Developer:** Traveller's Tales ● **Release:** June 06
● **Website:** www.sega-europe.com



Fans of the *Monkey Ball* series will be delighted that you progress by solving traditional puzzles

Hidden Monkey Cards scattered through the world can be used in the PSP exclusive card battle game



There are more than 50 furry monkeys waiting for you

Joy is being sucked out of the Monkey World. Yep, all the good stuff is slowly seeping from the world of AiAi and his little ball. Monkey is turning on monkey (which we all know is the worst crime of all) and kingdom is turning on kingdom...

"Hang on, isn't *Monkey Ball* supposed to be all about puzzles? What's this story nonsense all about?" we hear you moan. Well, Sega is so confident in the appeal of its monkey hero AiAi that it's taken the franchise into the realm of platform adventuring, and from our play test it's a good move.

The game takes place in the disintegrating Monkey World, a cuddly, exotic place ruled by five kingdoms on the verge of collapse, each of which has a unique look and challenge to overcome. Jungle Island is your classic monkey landscape, treetop huts and wooden walkways, while Moonhaven is distinctly unmonkeylike – it's a giant airship hovering high above the clouds and features mechanical cogs and speedy runways. All of the game's kingdoms have several things in common: they are all perfectly

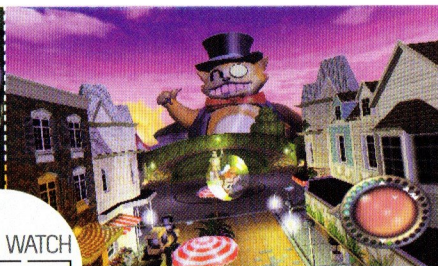
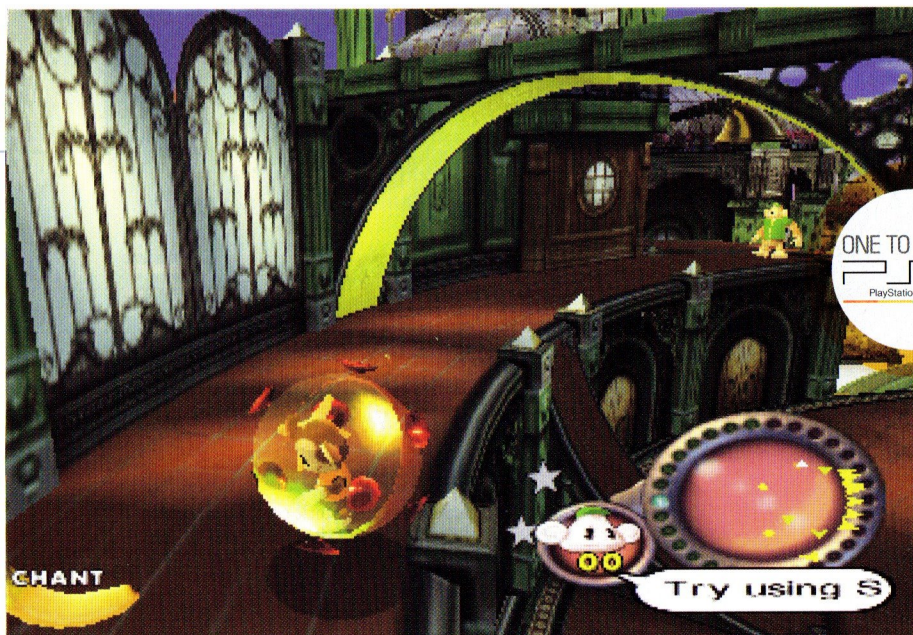
designed to roll around in AiAi's ball, they're populated by 50-plus furry monkey characters and all are littered with classic *Monkey Ball* puzzles and skill tests.

As befits a platform adventure, progress through *Super Monkey Ball Adventure* is made by helping the inhabitants out of sticky situations. The unique feature here is that control remains the same as in the original *Monkey Ball* puzzle games. Your ball will bounce and spin with the same frustrating inertia as in the old puzzle trays, only now a vast open world is ready to be rolled around.

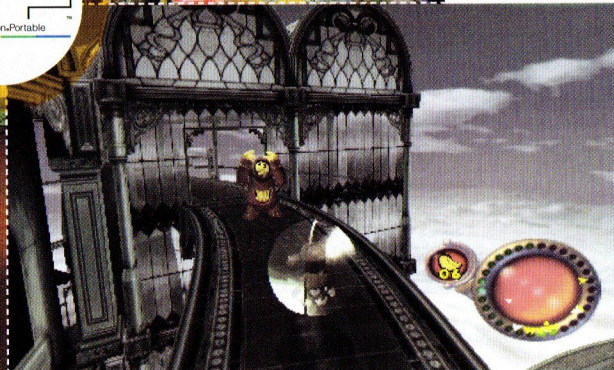
To help you out and avoid your PSP meeting an untimely end against the nearest wall, the game features a number of upgrades to earn. Special chants can be unlocked to give your ball new abilities. There are ten to master and they include Bounce, Speed and Tether as well as Sticky, which enables AiAi to spin up walls and on ceilings in an incredibly freaky way.

Fans of the original games shouldn't worry, either: Sega hasn't gone causal on everyone's cherished monkey series. Progress to new areas within each kingdom is made by solving some classic *Monkey Ball* puzzles, ensuring that at the heart of the game is the same addictive gameplay that's made traumatising cute simians an acceptable pastime.

Sega looks to have got the balance just right with this one. The preview code we've played has classic controls and puzzles at its core, which means fans shouldn't fear AiAi's new direction. ■



You will find yourself bouncing and spinning around in AiAi's ball just as you did in previous *Super Monkey Ball*, but the difference is that now there's a huge, open expanse for you to do your rolling around in



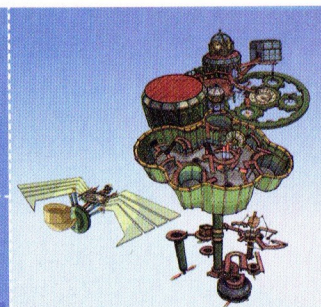
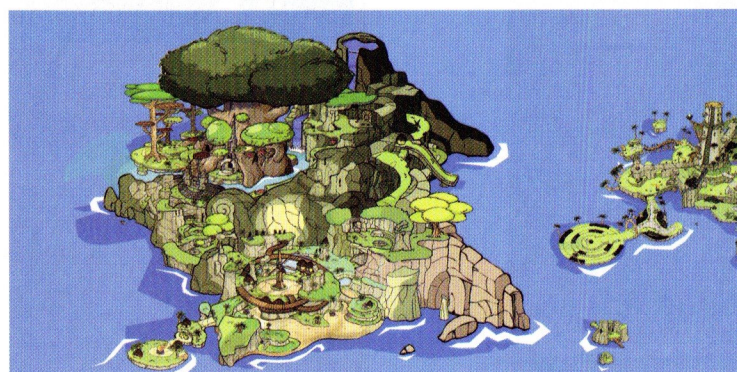
There are a number of upgrades within the game, including special chants that can be unlocked to provide your ball with amazing extra abilities. There are ten of these chants to master, including Bounce, Speed and Sticky



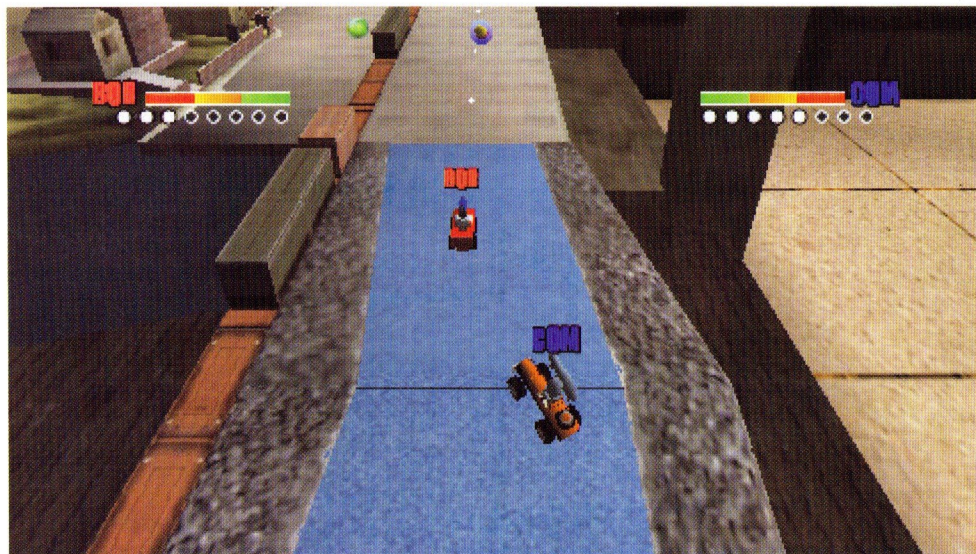
WI-BALLIN'

The PSP version will support WiFi and GameShare, so only one of you will need a copy of the game to play in the four-player party games. All of the old game modes return in *Super Monkey Ball Adventure*, but now there are three new games to get stuck into. So alongside classics like Boxing, Racing and Target you can play Castle (shoot monkeys at rivals' castles to dislodge bricks), Monkey Bounce (erm, bounce monkeys at each other) and Monkey Tag (steal balloons from fellow apes any way you can).

We like the adventure side to this new game, but let's face it, in the end we like the *Monkey Ball* series because it's mad. Not weird uncle mad, but crazily, addictive mad. So, the inclusion of the classic party games and WiFi GameShare should ensure AiAi will keep rolling, rolling, rolling in this latest outing.



The kingdoms of Monkey World aren't ideal holiday destinations



Sports cars, street racers, stock cars, 4x4s, beach buggies, muscle cars... take them on tracks in the house, the garden and – for the first time – beyond!

Micro Machines V4

Prepare for something very little that's going to be very big

● **Genre:** Racing ● **Publisher:** Codemasters
● **Developer:** Codemasters ● **Release:** September 06
● **Website:** www.codemasters.com



Get ready to burn some rubber, just be careful it's not on the red-hot cooker



If you get knocked out of a multiplayer game you can get even by lobbing objects at the remaining racers.

Often in conversation with gamers of a certain age, two games will always rear their heads: *Sensible Soccer* and *Micro Machines*. These were games that bred a near fanatical addiction among fans.

Though *Sensi* is yet to be confirmed for PSP, Codemaster's top-down miniature toy racer is on the way. This is not going to be a lazy updating, either. As with many new PSP games, the boys and girls at Codemasters are using everything the hand-held is capable of to create a unique multiplayer racer. At the forefront of this is WiFi and car collection. There will be more than 750 vehicles to collect in *Micro Machines V4*, but not all will be available on your single-player game. By racing friends in the Play For Keeps mode you'll be able to win their prized possessions, and bulk up your garage in the process.

Multiplayer really is central to *Micro Machines V4*. You'll be able to play in a four-player match-

up or even up to eight players with the planned controller share option (meaning much huddling over the controller). The game should be more fluid, too, as the old stop-start gameplay has been removed. Instead, a new token system is in place. When you pass a checkpoint the game will reward your position with a number of tokens: the winner is the player with the most tokens come the end of the race.

Aside from this token system the core gameplay will remain as manic as ever. Your toy cars, boats and planes will race across bathroom floors, kitchen tables and overgrown gardens. An arsenal of power-ups will aid your challenge for pole position, with missiles, guns and even giant hammers at your disposal.

It's hard not to get excited about *Micro Machines V4* on PSP, it would seem to be the perfect game for a WiFi hand-held. Now if only the Codies would confirm *Sensi Soccer*...



MAD TRACKER

Though the game will feature 25 environments, with two tracks in each, a new map editor will come packaged with the PSP game. So, if you get bored of tearing up the tiles on the Codies' kitchen floor, you can make your own.

The editor will be quite detailed and cover all the obstacles and items you'll face in the pre-built circuits. For example, race across a burning stove and your little tiny plastic wheels will melt off. If you're feeling nasty, you will be able to create some monstrous circuits.



Infected

We'll all be getting a dose this summer as the population turns to zombies



First you deplete the zombies' health, and then you kill them with a viral shot – simple

It's often said the simple ideas are always the best ideas. This is a belief Planet Moon Studios, known for fun blasts such as *MDK* and *Armed and Dangerous*, has taken to heart with its PSP debut, *Infected*.

The game has been developed with the PSP gamer in mind, and the idea behind *Infected* is so simple that there are no flash gimmicks or EA-style Game Breakers in here – just guns, zombies and points tallies. The story is befitting

of this premise: New York has been overrun by a virus, turning the population to zombies, the more people attacked the further the virus spreads and the larger the zombie army becomes. You can try to stop this explosion with bombs, bullets and a strong stomach.

Planet Moon has taken the run 'n' gun formula from its past games and reduced it to the bare bones – almost literally. Each mission is essentially an arena to clear of zombies, which is achieved by using a dual-wielding system to first deplete a zombie's health before killing it with a viral shot. Within each arena are bonus objectives, such as rescuing the civilians and stranded cops.

Given its basic gameplay it would come as no surprise that *Infected* works best in multiplayer. The game has been on sale in America for several months and Wi-Fi modes such as Deathmatch and Mad Cow have become very popular. The fast pace of the game and simple controls suit ad hoc gaming perfectly.

In keeping things very simple Planet Moon looks to have a fun shooter for these shores. While there are niggling doubts over the appeal of the single-player game, the Wi-Fi modes should provide a fun dose of carnage. The final game will feature eight-player Deathmatches, and the winner can spread a custom infection to friends' PSPs. ■



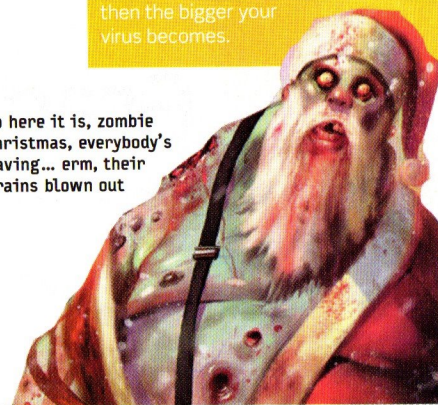
Some bombs, a gun and a strong stomach – these are the three things required for your zombie killing spree



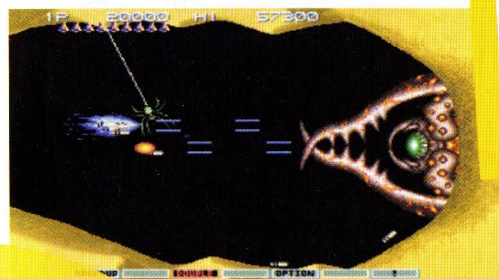
GLOBE TROTTER

Planet Moon Studios has been behind some great PC titles in the past, but the developer has turned its back on these systems in favour of the PSP. This makes *Infected* something of a rarity for us PSP owners, a game developed specifically for PSP. With this in mind *Infected* could offer some genuinely original Wi-Fi gaming, including the ability to track your virus (score) around the world. You will be able to watch as people attempt to beat your score – the more who try and fail then the bigger your virus becomes.

So here it is, zombie Christmas, everybody's having... erm, their brains blown out



● Genre: Shoot-'em-up ● Publisher: THQ
● Developer: Studios ● Release: TBC
● Website: www.planetmoon.com



PSP BONUS

The quick save feature works perfectly for pausing the game mid-way through a level!

Let's face it, being killed by a gigantic laser-spewing sand beetle is just so undignified

Konami has included a nifty 'save anywhere' feature which just adds to this new compilation's portable appeal



Gradius Portable

The PSP is taken back to the old skool

● Genre: Shoot-'em-up ● Publisher: Konami
● Developer: Konami ● Release: September 06
● Website: www.konami-europe.com

Whether in one of the remakes or PS2 collector's discs, Konami's side-scrolling shooter has remained a gaming holy cow. Gameplay and technology move on, but *Gradius* remains an institution not to be messed with.

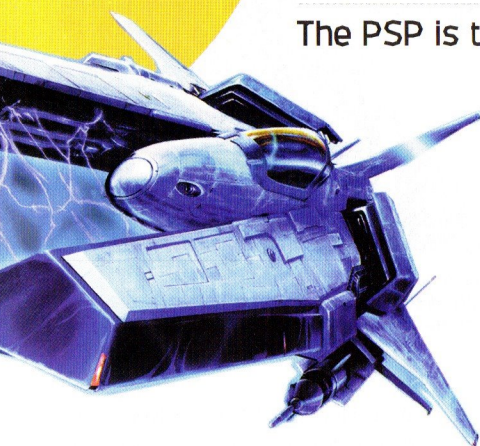
Gradius Portable is the latest disc to get a stab at chipping away at the myth. This PSP exclusive compilation, featuring the full set of *Gradius I, II, III* and *IV*, will come under scrutiny

when released for much the same reasons as other old games with big reputations. When played next to new shooters like, say, *Coded Arms*, can it deliver the thrills? Can *Gradius* enter the arena of modern shooters and come out unscathed? The answer, on the basis of this preview code, is yes.

Like so many retro titles making a comeback on PSP, *Gradius* works because of its simplicity. You fly your little craft from left to right, constantly shooting wave upon wave of weird aliens, blasting spider-legged aliens and exploding bubbles... big bouncing alien bubbles. In a word, shoot the boggle-eyes off everything that appears on screen.

Cleverly, your weapon power-up system is customisable. On the original *Gradius*, collecting orbs dropped by a disseminated wave of aliens would highlight a power-up in the weapons list. The more orbs collected, the further up the list you could go. In this way you could select a weapon for a certain situation. In later editions of the series, such as *Gradius IV*, you can not only select power-ups using this orb system, but also customise the list prior to flinging yourself into the heat of battle. You could, for example, put the laser earlier on in the list if this were your preferred weapon.

It's the scaled down version of *Gradius* sitting at your fingertips that makes this collection work so well. On the PSP's small screen the game's simple graphics look very stylised. The variety of alien waves, peculiar landscapes and use of colour feels bold and vibrant. When you first confront the fiery dragons in *Gradius II* you'll be wowed, and this despite just coming out of one of *Tomb Raider*'s craggiest temples. Sure, on a big screen played through a PS2, and put up against *Black*, you'd



The original's visuals are redesigned in the later *Gradius* titles to include giant crystals that rebound shots around the screen (above). *Gradius IV* uses more smoke effects than *Stars In Their Eyes* (above right)

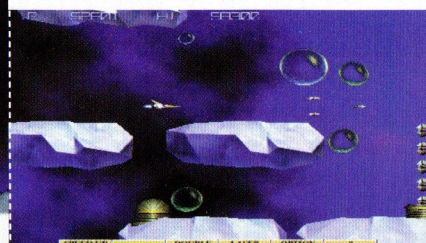


THE BOSS OF YOU

Most old skool 2D shooters lived or died on the freakishness of their end of level bosses. After all, you've just struggled through hundreds of waves of alien ships and twisted the buttons of your pad in frustration, so you want an imaginative set-piece to make it all worthwhile.

Gradius is no exception to the rule. Though the first level guardian is somewhat tame compared to *R-Type's* Alien parody, things get better, quickly. The mid-level dragons emerging from suns are impressive enough, but the gigantic sand beetle that spews lasers can't be faulted. Handily, with this compilation you can track how Konami's artistic bods have evolved the ideas – the fiery dragons become liquid metal, which really became the in thing in the '80s following *Terminator 2*.

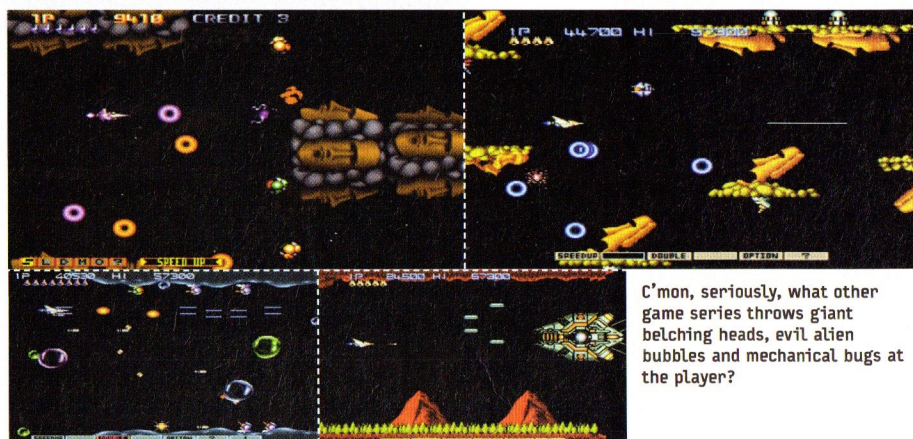
You know you're game is old skool when you have to shoot a giant ice worm in the butt with a laser (left). Shoot the bubbles to split them into smaller pieces (below)



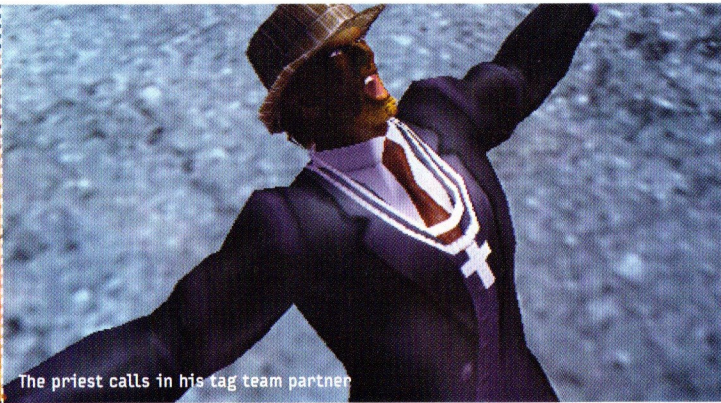
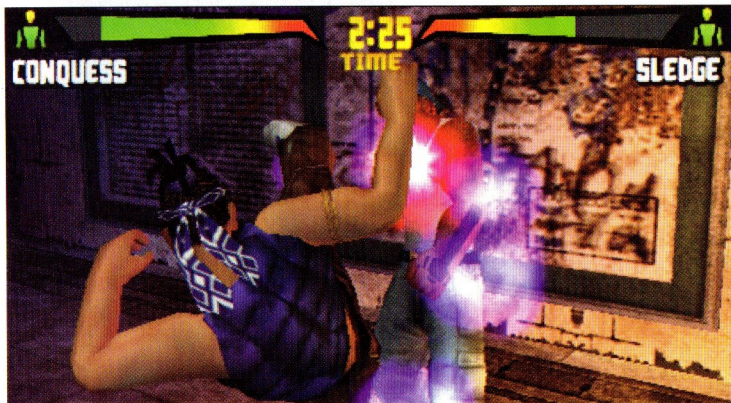
be nonplussed, but on your palm-sized widescreen it works well.

Uniquely, the game features a number of options designed for the PSP. For example, you can resize the screen, playing in PSP-friendly widescreen or in the original coin-op's squarer shape. There is also the option to turn on the originals' slowdown, if you want the perfect *Gradius* experience.

Oddly, putting some of the oldest games ever on gaming's newest console seems to work. *Street Fighter* is excellent, *Ultimate Ghosts 'n' Goblins* looks stunning and *Gradius Portable* is simple, stylish well-crafted fun, and this isn't even finished code. ■



C'mon, seriously, what other game series throws giant belching heads, evil alien bubbles and mechanical bugs at the player?



The Con

The only game where it pays to lose

● **Genre:** Beat-'em-up ● **Publisher:** tbc
● **Developer:** SCEA ● **Release:** tbc
● **Website:** www.scea.com



The WiFi fighting continues *The Con's* hustle theme: when a friend is beaten you can take some of their hard-earned items

The challenge for near enough every game ever released has been to beat it. It's a very odd proposition then, to ask gamers to throw this winning instinct out the window and to actually lose a bout, forfeit a match or drop points.

Well, that's exactly what *The Con* demands you do. It's a simple premise that aims to add a tactical edge to the game's one-on-one bouts of street violence. Before a fight you can bet on either yourself or your opponent to win. Now, during the fight you can boost the pot of cash by taking hits, a timer determines just when the pot is locked, at which point you can make your *Rocky*-style comeback and clean up at the bookies. Likewise, you can take a dive to earn more cash. Crucially, a respect meter wavers at the top of screen and if the punters baying for blood aren't convinced you're for real they'll refuse to pay-up.

This juggling act between when to take hits, when to make a grandstand comeback and the constant demands of the throng for more blood does add a real sense of strategy to the fights.

The down side, though, is the lack of control over your hip-hop hustler. After playing the excellent *Fight Night Round 3*, *The Con* can feel very limited and sluggish.

It's the core idea of conning the cash out of the game's crowds of street thugs, pimps and playthings that will hopefully have you hooked. This money can be used to buy new moves and clothing for your fighters, so there is an added incentive to get rich quick.

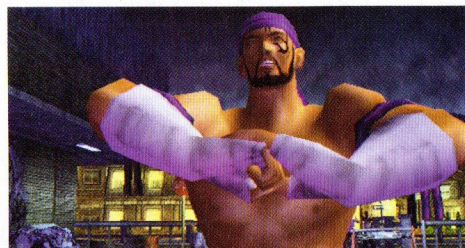
The Con is an odd beat-'em-up that has a lacklustre fighting system but could still have you glued due to the tactical nature of being able to play the crowds. Odds are this could be a novel addition to the PSP's line-up when released later this year. ■



SELF-MADE MAN

We're never satisfied with the characters created for us, are we? Which is why games like *The Con* always feature plenty of room to develop your chosen fighter.

Once you've selected the three characters that will make up your 'crew' it's time to splash some of that hard-conned cash. First up you can fiddle with the look, change the hairstyle (offering +5 health) and then take on the wardrobe like a manic Trinny and Susanna – out with the corduroy strides and in with cut-off shorts. Finally, you'll want to chop and change the moves list to aid your progress on the streets.



Jasmine can perform a suplex wearing heels. Respect

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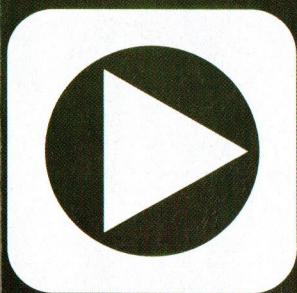
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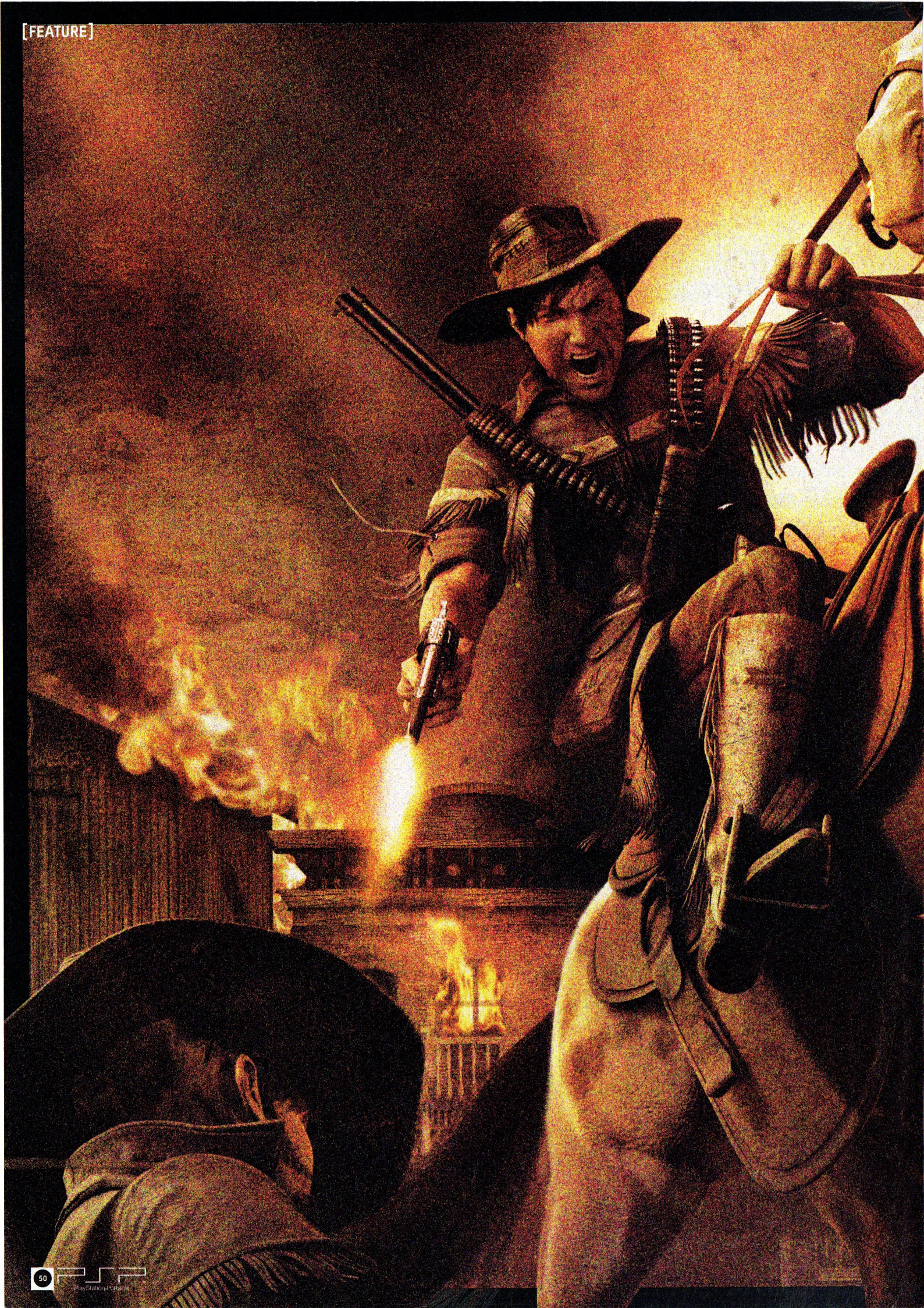
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● **Game Name:** Gun: Showdown ● **Publisher:** Activision ● **Developer:** Rebellion ● **Release:** Autumn ● **Website:** www.gunthegame.com

THE WIFI WEST

Multiplayer six-shooter moseys onto PSP with *Gun*'s purdy little pardner

● **Words:** Lee Hall

Get off your horse and drink this milk... *Gun: Showdown* has nothing to do with the bow-legged cowboys and semi-Mexican injuns in the John Wayne snorefests your drunk uncle forces you to watch around Christmas.

The milk here is distinctly soured thanks to a plot, characters and action that reflect the true grit of the Wild West – the greed, the gut-busting gunshots and the girls in girdles who peopled a filthy chapter in American history.

Gun: Showdown largely follows the plot and gameplay established by its elder PS2 brother, *Gun*, only with some rootin', tootin' PSP extras thrown in for good measure – more on those later. And from what we've seen, UK developer Rebellion has done a darn fine job of squeezing all of the immediacy and thrilling action of the original on to your hand-held.

A plot penned by Hollywood blockbusterologist Randall Johnson (*The Doors*, *Mask Of Zorro*) casts you as one Colton White, a Western Luke Skywalker who's family is diced by some local gunslingers. Just before Colton's pop is, well, popped, the old man claims he's not our hero's real dad... And so begins a journey of self-discovery, revenge and killing. Lots of killing.

Dodge City and the deserts of the Wild West provide the setting for this grisly action adventure as you track down the rogues behind the death of your papa (or was he?)



SMOKIN' GUNS

If its PS2 big brother is anything to go by, and it is, we're expecting a mighty arsenal to be unlockable in *Gun: Showdown*. Here's a selection of confirmed shooters that have us hot under the collar...

Volcanic Pistol

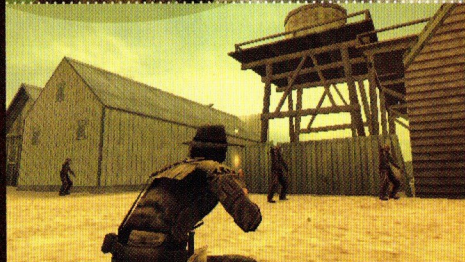
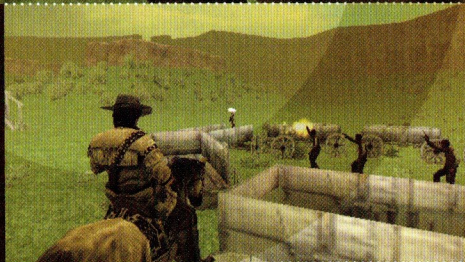
Boasting a devastating 'rocket ball' cartridge which had a charge placed in its hollow centre, the Volcanic Pistol was a favourite for gun-slingers facing multiple opponents. It could hold ten rounds instead of the standard six, making it ideal for prolonged firefights.

Sharps Rifle

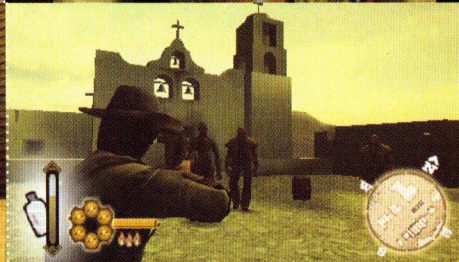
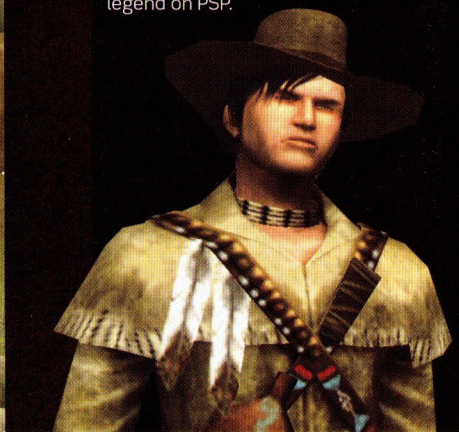
This long-range boomstick was a real man's weapon. Its heavy barrel meant it took some strength to handle it, but this 1874 model was steady as a rock when it came to targeting. Good enough to shoot the tail off a prairie dawg from a thousand paces. Probably.

Winchester Rifle

An easy-to-use yet deadly shooter, which boasted the world's first centre-fire cartridge design. The Winchester was hugely popular in *Gun*-era America and it was only 50 years after they appeared in 1873 that Winchester stopped producing them.



A ring of carts won't protect you from a couple of well-placed Winchester shots (top). Looks like these guys have been caught red-handed (above, left). Going to church was a dangerous pastime in the West (above, right)



and stop for the occasional bout of bareback riding with local floosies.

In a free-roaming environment you get to choose your next mission against the dramatic backdrop of deserts and mountains, running into friendly hookers, nerds and nutters as you go. Along the way you'll also get to take on oodles of side missions, such as tracking down local outlaws, or even indulge in a spot of poker playing. Other missions include hunting wild animals and participating in a risky frontier fort assault.

ALL GUNS BLAZING

Best of all, your epic journey winds through a storyline of unusual power for a videogame, but it's when the bullets fly that *Gun: Showdown* promises to really set your campfire roaring. If you think you need a contemporary setting with all the killing machines of modern warfare at your disposal to have gun fun, think again. In *Gun: Showdown* your arsenal is surprisingly diverse for a game set at the end of the 19th century.

Everything from machetes to Gatling guns, from six-shooters to explosives are on offer to help your fight for truth and satisfy your lust for bloodshed. And be warned: the blood and guts will fly in a game that should boast a body count to humble even the likes of *Liberty City Stories*.

And while shooting the hell out of everything in spurs is fun, *Gun's* gameplay is

not all about raw firepower. The action is mixed up with neat sections, such as when you're posing as a Native American – here you must stealth your way around using a bow and arrow to silently knock-off your foes. Of course, you can upgrade your weapon to flaming arrows if you still fancy causing a fuss. For extra variety, the PSP version of the game will even boast a pile of extra missions and side quests, which we expect to reveal next issue, and proves that *Gun: Showdown* will have plenty of additional content to offer fans of the original game.

Speaking of the game's PS2 big brother, the superb bullet-time mode, called Quick



Draw, returns and will give you that extra advantage against your opponents during a shoot-out. Your Quick Draw meter is boosted after a series of headshots and general sharp-shooting, so practising to the point where you can hit a spittoon from 600 yards will pay off when you get hassled at the bar.

So what's new for PSP? Well, crucially, you'll have cause to unholster your hand-held for multiplayer battles – new additions designed solely to capitalise on your PSP's WiFi capabilities. The Wild West action comes in three flavours: your vanilla game is the Deathmatch mode, which enables six tobacco chewin' rivals to blast it out on a series of single-player maps. We're expecting the classic bar room to be in there for starters, with a smattering of other locales from the main game, too.

A touch of spice is added for the Last Man Standing game mode, which is essentially the Deathmatch mode, only with players given a

In a free-roaming environment you get to choose your next mission against the dramatic backdrop of deserts and mountains, while running into hookers, nerds and nutters as you go

set number of lives. Here, ganging up on stronger foes could see weaker gunslingers eliminate a threat before they duke it out for final victory. But we're more excited than a Klondike prospector about the Gunslinger Duel mode, which enables you to relive all those quick-draw fantasies. This is a macho, tobacco chewing face-off in which players must pull their weapon after, and not before, the chime of the town clock. Best get practising in front of the mirror, pardners.

THE HORSE WHISTLER

Another key PSP exclusive sounds sweeter than the tuneful trumps of baked bean-stuffed frontier men – you get to look after, upgrade and generally build up a meaningful



It might not be the best idea to stand right next to a barrel of powder when taking on these low-lives, or just stand right in front of the two of them with no cover, for that matter

relationship with your horse. And before you complain that 'that aint na-tu-ral', quit kissin' your darn cousin while we explain.

Although a horse won't be essential for *Gun: Showdown*, many of the missions require a steed and getting from A to B over vast land tracts is treacherous, and not to say potentially tedious, on foot. You can mount

any horse in the game, but if you acquire a beast after a ranching mission you'll be able to improve its key attributes, such as health, stamina and speed, to help you on your quest.

As well as providing a neat RPG element to proceedings, once you've renamed your horse, beefing up its skills is really just a fantastic excuse to get stuck into the side missions. Completing Pony Express side briefs, for instance, will boost your steed's speed and stamina, whereas herding missions will improve the beast's overall health. And speaking of health – if the poor blighter gets hit by a wave of native arrows and bites the dust, you can always simply whistle and wait for a fresh replacement to turn up!

While your ride will be a key aspect of *Gun: Showdown*, it looks certain this gunslinger will be far from a pony. PSP has been left wanting since *Liberty City Stories*, so this will go down a treat for fans of free-roaming action. ■

THE BAD AND THE UGLY

Thomas Magruder is a greedy railman with a dark military past. In cahoots with the despicable Reverend Josiah Reed Magruder, he's using mining and railroads to build his wealth and fuel his quest for power. These immoral SOB's can't stand the likes of upstart Colton upsetting their way of life with ridiculous notions of justice and the truth.



After a hard day's gunslinging it's nice to go for a pint (top), but no doubt you'll cause some trouble (above)

REVIEWS

W The PSP is fast becoming one of the most widely supported consoles on the shelves. The PSP offers games for everyone, whether you want the best RPGs like *Monster Hunter: Freedom* or the ultimate shooters like *Syphon Filter: Dark Mirror*, the PSP has it all. With so many killer games being released week upon week you need to separate the good from the bad – the excellent *OutRuns* from the duff *Street Riders*. We've handpicked our writers to deliver the most in-depth and honest reviews you will read. More so, we aim to review every new PSP game on sale – this issue alone has a staggering 26 games in for review!

PQ: Practical Intelligence Quotient

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Football Manager Handheld

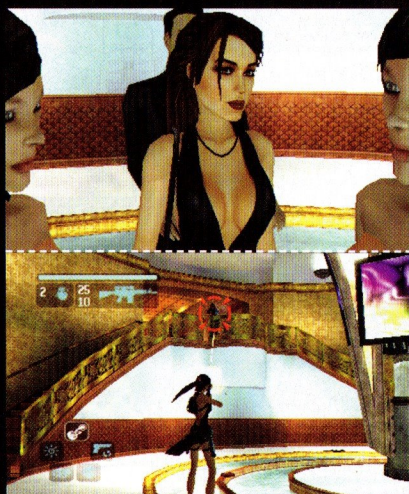
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Field Commander

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Lara's now appearing on the PSP's small screen – and she still looks splendidly ample



TOMB RAIDER:

Worse *and* better than the PS2 version?

● Publisher: Eidos ● Developer: Crystal Dynamics ● Price: £34.99 ● WiFi Multiplayer: Yes ● Downloads: No

Bizarrely, for a game with such simple puzzles, *Tomb Raider: Legend* leaves us scratching our heads. On one hand, it's harder to control, less precise and more annoying than the PS2 version, but for the same reasons, it's also – sort of – better. On the other hand, it's rougher, more clumsily lit and less detailed than the PS2 version, but in an odd way, actually more impressive. Confusing, eh? Don't worry – we'll explain everything. For now, all you need to know is that the PSP version *almost* matches its PS2 forbear, and that Lara Croft is *nearly* back to her best, and online for the first time – with hugely satisfying results.

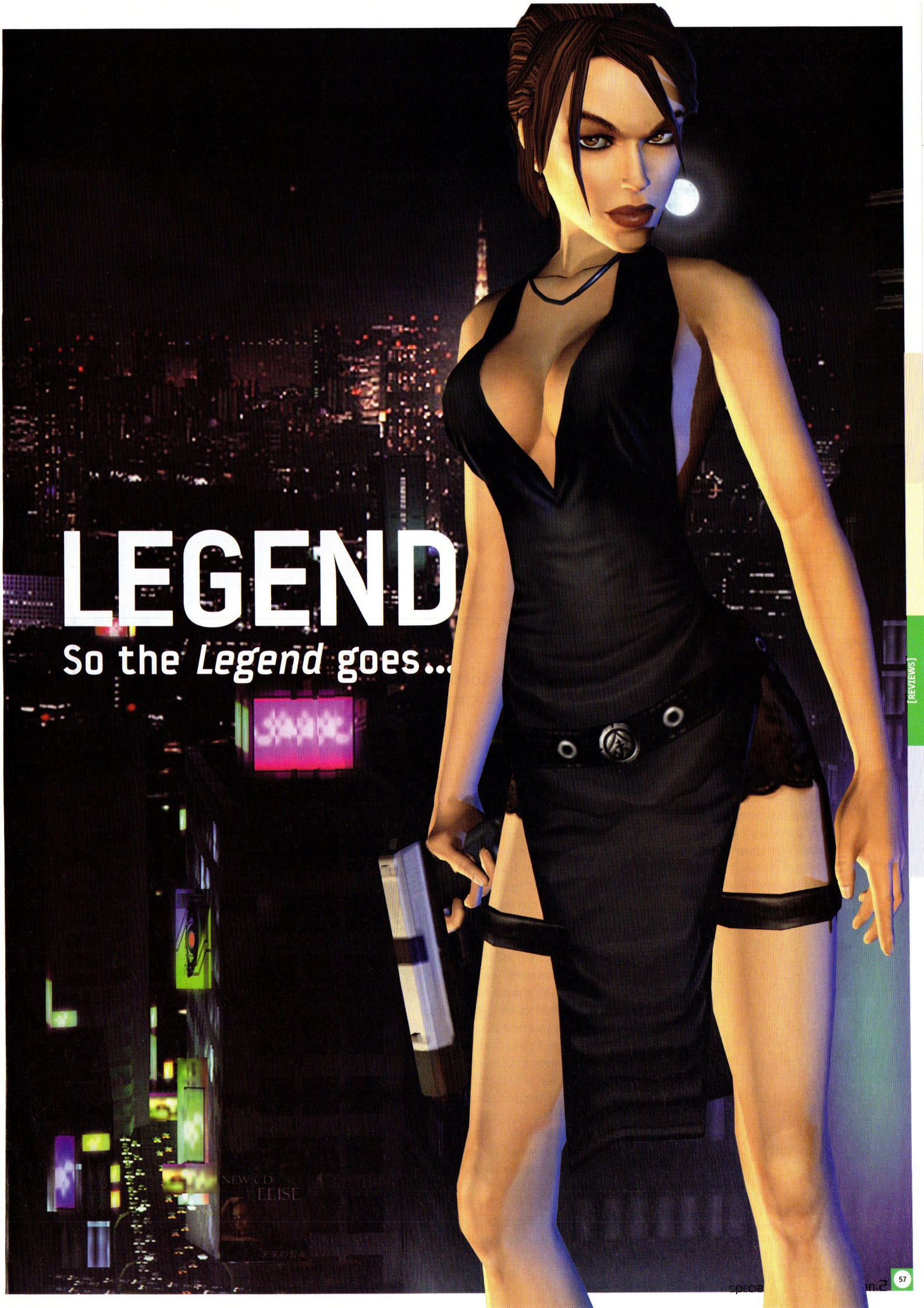
After the shambling travesty of *Tomb Raider: Angel of Darkness* on PS2 (where Lara went mental and lurched around Paris asking tramps questions and struggling to climb onto boxes), *Legend* returns to the series' roots: raiding tombs, solving puzzles and marvelling at Lara's agility. The plot's the usual mumbo-jumbo about uniting parts of an ancient artefact – with some added King Arthur-dimension hopping and motherly strife – but it's a fine excuse for globe trotting, from the lush waterfalls and cryptic tombs of Ghana, to the snowy wastes and industrial laboratories of Kazakhstan. The sense of exploration, and diversity of scenery, rivals any *Tomb Raider* game to date.

The real discovery, though, is Lara. She's beautiful. *Technically*, of course. You can swoop the camera close to her face and marvel at her big soft eyes, ruddy lips and delicate lashes – it's the best, and most human, she's ever looked. They've even *decreased* her major assets, and overhauled her wardrobe – from the classic hot pants to the Angelina-Jolie-in-*Mr-and-Mrs-Smith*

'tribute' ballroom dress. It's so detailed, you can see every item in Lara's inventory, from belt buckle grenades, to shoulder-slung shotgun. Most impressively, get Lara wet and her clothes cling to her skin while slowly drip-drying in real-time.

Lara's movements are equally lavish. She rolls, swims, flips, shimmies along ledges and swings with seamless grace – the levels have been cunningly designed to maximise the fluidity of her movements, allowing a smooth transition from, say, rope swinging, to pole rotation to ledge grabbing. At its pomp, it's slicker than *Prince of Persia*, with less of the aggravating 'where next?' pauses for thought. Lara no longer moves on a rigid



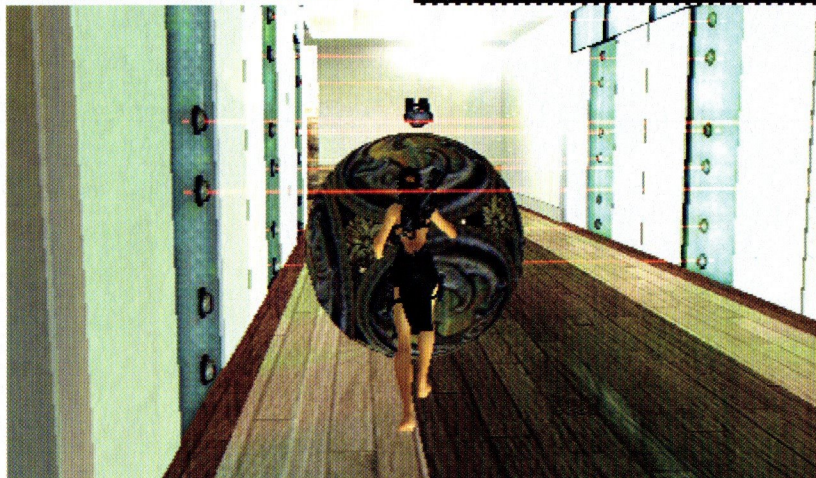
A woman with dark hair, wearing a black halter-neck dress with a wide belt and thigh straps, holds a handgun. She stands against a backdrop of a city skyline at night, with various lights and buildings visible. The text "LEGEND" is prominently displayed in large white letters, with "So the Legend goes..." below it. A small inset image shows a CD case for "NEW CD ELISE".

LEGEND

So the *Legend* goes...

NEW CD
ELISE

Running barefoot through a corridor of laser guided traps is a dangerous game... for a start there's splinters to contend with (below)



grid' system like the PSone games, but moves in a more organic, 'analogue' style - nudge the stick to tiptoe, push to sprint. It sounds confusing, but as a rule, if you think you can make a jump, you can. Lara can even perform classic moves, like swan dives, elegant handstands on ledges and graceful back flips while shooting her twin pistols.

Combat is solid, if repetitive. Hold the left shoulder button to lock on and skip

save for the bosses and shield-carrying goons later on. Guards oafishly congregate by exploding scenery, and combat descends into time-consuming, challenge-free farce. It's not painful, just not skilful or diverse. The driving sections are worse - or rather, blander - still, with cruddy bike physics, simple controls and no feeling of challenge. It's like you're holding down four buttons just to accelerate the scenery.

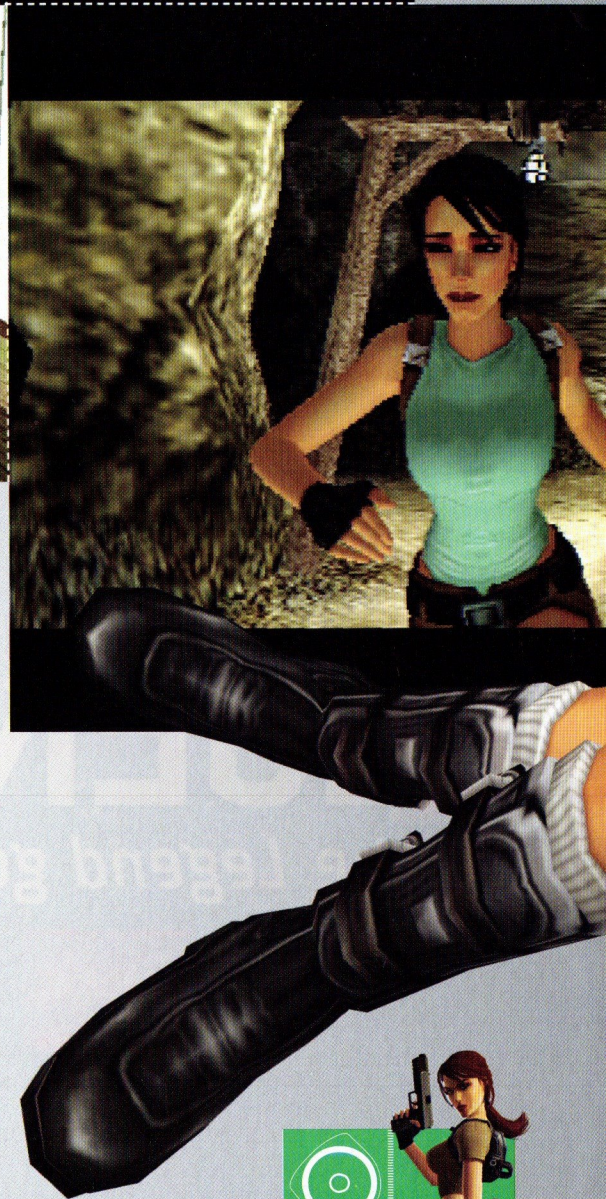


Most impressively, get Lara wet and her clothes cling to her skin while slowly drip-drying in real time. It's the best, and most human, she's ever looked

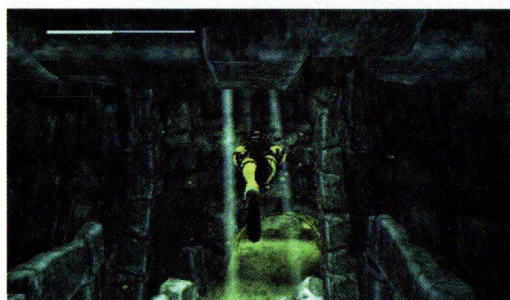
or slide about while mashing the right button to shoot. You can even do a *Matrix*-style slow-mo leap by double tapping near an enemy and vaulting off their shoulders. Trouble is, this move is possibly *too* powerful - enemies appear clumsy and weak. You can kill anyone just by blindly running around and locking on,

Puzzles are cute, but fairly patronising and obviously flagged - switches glint, the cut-scene camera lingers clumsily on key objects and Lara's even got puzzle-solving binoculars to indicate scenery you can interact with. We did get stuck a few times, but only for minutes, and the solution usually involved moving the camera a few inches higher to reveal a previously unseen grappling hook point, or rolling ball after ball, onto giant switches. Unlike the previous games, you never need to ferry objects between locations, and are rarely left standing on top of a giant chamber planning your next step in puzzled awe. True, it's less frustrating than, say, *Tomb Raider 2*, but there's none of the satisfaction of finally spotting a distant object, or snagging a ledge after 20 minutes of jumping into oblivion. Even *God of War* on PS2 - a thundering action game - has more complex puzzles, and this is *Tomb Raider*, after all.

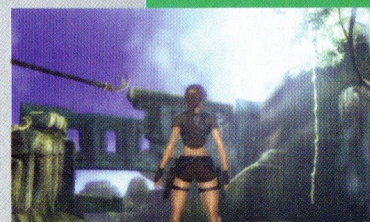
Oddly, this is where the PSP version is arguably superior to the PS2 game. While the puzzles and acrobatic sections are identical, they're *physically* harder to do



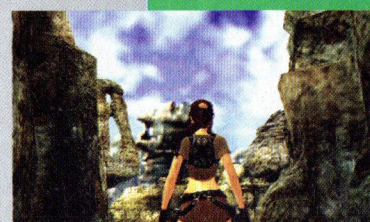
PS2 vs PSP



Should Lara see what's in the box - deal or no deal? Trap or no trap? (above)



The PS2 version is shaded better but also looks a bit blurred.



The PSP's hi-res screen means Lara looks sharper and more detailed

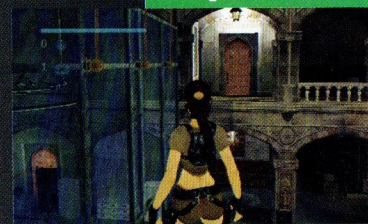


Why Explore Croft Manor?

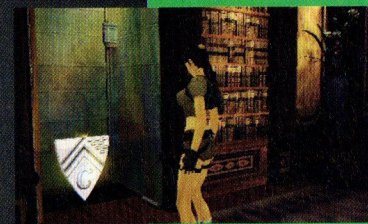
It's arguably the best bit of the PS2 version, and virtually identical on PSP. The Croft Manor sub-game, available from the main menu, invites you to explore Lara's home looking for hidden items, which can be used to unlock bonuses such as object renders, new outfits and cheat codes. While initially bewildering, Croft Manor is a hotbed of subtle, obscure puzzles (something missing from the main game), as Lara flicks hidden switches, twirls around the cunningly assembled gym and solves abstract clues. There's no shooting, either, and a relaxing distraction for classic Tomb Raider fans.



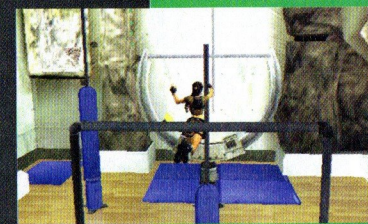
The Lady of the manor romps through the lounge looking for bonus items



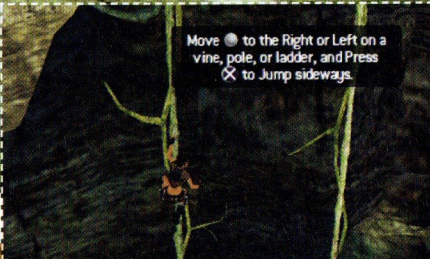
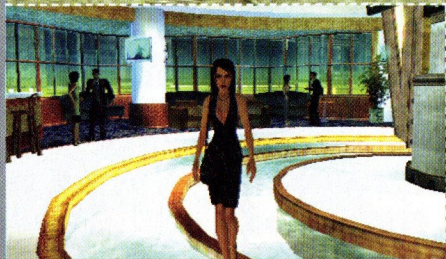
Seeing as it's Lara's gaff, it shouldn't be too hard to find 'hidden' bonuses



A moving bookcase displays a lost shield - who left that there?

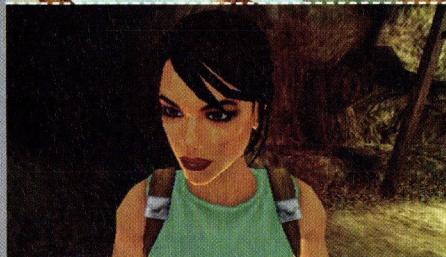


Time to get all hot and sweaty - this is how Lara maintains that physique



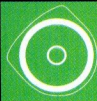
Move to the Right or Left on a vine, pole, or ladder, and Press to Jump sideways.

She's the king of the swingers (above). Fortunately, her lipstick stays immaculate, even when investigating dark, dank caves (Left)





This fiend is about to get whacked for staring at Lara's pins too long



Boss Battles: Explained

The boss battles were relatively simple on PS2, but on PSP are unnecessarily frustrating due to the fiddly controls. Easy scraps, like Takamoto in the Tokyo level (see below), are blighted by unreliable targeting and the intrusive camera system; while trickier fights, like the slightly obscure tussle with the magnetic gas beast in Kazakhstan, are needlessly aggravating. The bosses don't ruin the game, but lack the wow factor, or innovation, to be truly memorable.



Lara finally meets her nemesis... Anne Robinson



From explorer and treasure hunter to part-time pole dancer



Unfortunately, a lack of originality plagues the end of level bosses




Anatomy of a puzzle

The puzzles are quite basic, and almost always focused around one location, but there are moments that make you flush - gently - with pride. Here's one of the better puzzles from the start of the game...



A throbbing piece of metal between her legs, Lara rides in on a souped-up motorbike (left, bottom)



More acrobatics from our voluptuous heroine. If you look carefully at the top of Lara's legs, you can clearly see her arsenal

due to the PSP's fiddly analogue stick and awkward camera control (hold square plus analogue to rotate, or L to centre the view behind Lara). While the PS2 game's a breeze, and can be completed in eight hours, PSP's fiddly controls make it feel more like 'traditional' *Tomb Raider*, demanding careful alignment and precision leaps. It's aggravating, but debatably more

the best looking game on PS2 onto Sony's relatively underpowered handheld is staggering. It's like Sunderland lifting the UEFA Cup in the year that Chelsea win the Champions League – one achievement is more prestigious, but the other borders on a miracle. Our only gripe is the brightness of PSP's LCD screen – even on the 'secret' level four setting (available only when you're plugged into



Somehow the developers have squeezed the entire PS2 game onto the PSP – every boss battle, puzzle, weapon, stunning vista and cut-scene. It borders on a miracle

rewarding. That said, if you're used to the PS2 game's slick controls, it's frustrating to see Lara leap at awkward angles, overshoot platforms and struggle just to look straight ahead thanks to the PSP's relatively clumsy analogue nub.

The miracle, though, is the direct comparison. Somehow, developers Crystal Dynamics have squeezed the *entire* PS2 game onto PSP – every boss battle, puzzle, weapon, stunning vista and cut-scene. The textures have been scaled back, the scenery is more angular and objects rougher (see 'PS2 vs PSP'), but the fact they've squeezed *arguably*

the mains), some tombs are so dark, you can't see switches, or ledges, that were obvious in the PS2 version.

Don't be fooled. It's not a *Tomb Raider* game in the traditional sense, but a fluid, rollercoaster, blockbuster adventure in the style of an EA Bond game – you're effortlessly dragged from one entertaining scene to the next, and almost guaranteed to see the sequel-baiting ending. The controls are fundamentally slick (if possibly too fiddly for PSP), visuals impressive and WiFi play (see 'Tomb Trials') a stunning addition, paving the way for multiplayer elements in future PS2 and PS3 sequels. If only they'd spent more time tweaking the content for PSP's fiddly controls (instead of a direct port), and taken a few more risks (we don't mind actually *thinking* about puzzles if they're well designed), then Lara's reinvention would have been the stuff of legend, rather than a very good, but slightly frustrating and easy, game. The head scratching, it seems, passes to the developers trying to craft a superior sequel. ■ Dan Dawkins

VERDICT

A slick, entertaining, game with near-miraculous visuals and worthy multiplayer modes, offset by wonky controls and simple puzzles

8



Tomb Trials

The PSP version of *Legends* offers some unique handheld multiplayer gaming. You can take Lara online to play some uniquely *Tomb Raider* game modes, here's the best...



Master System

Run through a randomly-generated course to beat an opponent's best time.



Treasure Hunt

A kind of 'capture the flag' mode but with treasure. Hide the loot and then search it out.



Head to Head

Standard Deathmatch shenanigans as you hunt other players down through the tombs.

IN-DEPTH

Tomb Raider: Legend

Pros: Impossibly beautiful, with identical content to the PS2 version

Cons: PSP's wonky analogue makes basic leaps unduly testing

Graphics: The scenery is sweeping and varied. LCD brightness is an issue, mind

Sound: Haunting, atmospheric themes and reasonable voice acting

Gameplay: Imperfect yet certainly playable, and fun

Lifespan: 10 hours for the main game; Croft Manor and Tomb Trials add more

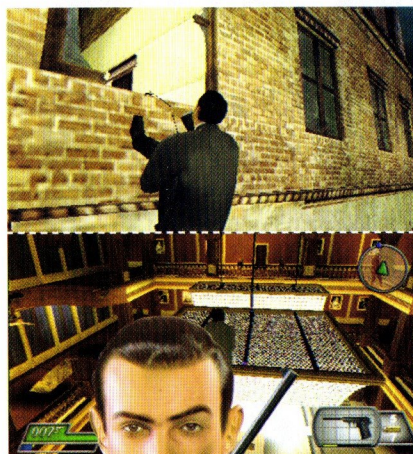
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Surely you don't need to use auto-aim that close? (right) We're not quite sure what he's doing to this poor fellow (below). Wouldn't it be easier to use the balcony? (bottom)



Bet Connery's got this game, if only to gawp at how accurately good he looks in it (right). Must shoot those few pixels over there! (bottom)



Film Play

You can play a Kalashnikov clip-full of classic scenes from the film, including...

The hedge maze

Remember the start of *From Russia With Love*, where Grant stalks a Bond-masked henchman through the grounds of a stately home? You play as that expendable baddy.

The gypsy camp

Enough gawping at the scantily-clad Romany wrestling with Bond, there are evil-doers to be dispatched. Fight alongside Karim in this extended take on the classic film sequence.

Grab the Lektor

Storm the Russian embassy in true anti-diplomatic, British style to snatch that vital piece of encoding equipment before escaping through an underground network of tunnels.

Fight Grant on the train

The psychotic Russian is posing as Bond's contact as he and Tatiana attempt to flee the country with the Lektor. This is one part of the game that differs wildly from its cinematic equivalent – for the better though, we think.

FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE

PAY ATTENTION, BOND. WANNABE SECRET AGENTS SHOULD ALWAYS CARRY ONE OF THESE ABOUT THEIR PERSON...

● Publisher: EA ● Developer: EA ● Price: £29.99 ● WiFi Multiplayer: Yes ● Downloads: No

Like a ridiculously docile *Bond* villain, we've let the world's most famous secret agent escape brutal punishment once again. Seemingly guilty of the crime of being yet another cheap PS2 to PSP port, we had *From Russia With Love* strapped on to the table, with our critical laser fast approaching its crotch area. We didn't expect it to perform: we expected it to die...

However, when the chips were down, this portable *Bond* came up aces, precisely because it was a straight port of the formidable console version. The visuals on offer are practically identical to those seen on the big screen, with Sean Connery's likeness beaming eerily at every turn. The cut-scenes look a little blurred, but the in-game characters are pin-sharp recreations of their real-life counterparts, making *From Russia With Love* one of the most striking hand-held games yet released. The voices are fairly solid too, and although Connery and company sound as if they're dubbing the game from inside an empty tin of beans, it's still a great effort.

Action-wise, this is the same game that charmed its way into our lives at the end of last year. The auto-aim comes into its own on the PSP, enabling the game

to neatly sneak past the fact that Sony's portable only has one analogue stick. Although this leaves the sluggish camera control to the face buttons, it seriously cuts down the frustration factor when you're trying to move and aim at the same time. Shooting purists will be pleased to know that Bond-time has made it through the conversion process, giving you the chance to take precise aims at your enemies while hiding behind cover. The only real problem comes during the sniping missions - the controls are far too sensitive for any accurate

gameplay is as smooth and exciting as any shoot-out sequence from the films. It may be a clone of the PS2 original, but *From Russia With Love* on PSP is the better Bond. Once again, the little guy wins. ■ Andy Hartup

VERDICT

Put down the Martini and silenced PP7 and pick up this storming hand-held version of *From Russia With Love*

8



There are a handful of mini-games for each stage, and a six-player WiFi mode that puts most other portable multiplayer titles to shame

long-range bullet play.

This game differs from the real-life, suave super-spy in that it sticks with the player after showing them a good time. Aside from the main story missions, there are a handful of mini-games for each stage, and a six-player WiFi mode that puts most other portable multiplayer titles to shame. There's a hoard of options available, and the deathmatch



The auto-aim function means you won't lose your Bond charm with your PSP's analogue nub



The graphics in *From Russia With Love* are top-notch, with big draw-spaces and clever lighting effects

IN-DEPTH

From Russia With Love

Pros: Eye-pleasing visuals and smooth-running gameplay make this a fantastic hand-held shooter

Cons: The controls falter slightly when asked to perform pin-sharp shooting, not good for the fiddly sniper sections

Graphics: Mini-Connery is looking shockingly good

Sound: Bond theme and top voice talents sound fine

Gameplay: Quick and slick bite-sized bits of Bond

Lifespan: Mini-games and multiplayer in abundance

8

7

7

8

PQ: PRACTICAL INTELLIGENCE

HEY STUPID, TRY THIS GAME FOR SIZE

● Publisher: D3 Publisher ● Developer: Now Production ● Price: £24.99 ● WiFi Multiplayer: No ● Downloads: No

Proving exams can be fun, this latest PSP puzzler will test your patience. But don't worry, it will be the most fun exam you've ever sat, and you won't get a board rubber thrown at your face for talking.

A bit like the *The Crystal Maze* – minus bald nutter – and set in virtual reality environments, *PQ* places you in control of a figure who's sole goal in life is to reach the exit to each room he is placed in before the clock hits zero.

The puzzles are engaging and should only take you a few minutes, if that, making it great to pull out and advance to the next stage when waiting for the bus. There are 100 levels to get through, divided into ten stages and on completion your PQ score is provided. This is when the game comes into its own, because you can check your world ranking online using your PSP's WiFi ability. You can then post your score, joining the international ranks of smug geniuses keen to let everyone know

The time you take to get through each level and how efficiently you move the figure around to complete a stage is used to calculate your Practical Intelligence Quota or PQ

The elusive exit is blocked with various obstacles that you must push, pull and negotiate, and come in the form of conveyor belts, revolving doors, blocks and lasers. The time you take to get through each level or 'question', and how efficiently you move the figure around to complete a stage is used to calculate your Practical Intelligence Quota or PQ. This is basically your common sense, logical thinking and speed of judgment, so if you still have trouble with Lego, this can tell you why.

that they are a brain cell short of Stephen Hawking.

The puzzles can be a bit repetitive, meaning the game is best played in short bursts, and this sense of monotony is reflected in the graphics and sound which both do their best to avoid becoming a distraction. *PQ* won't dazzle you, but it does bring something new to the puzzle genre and offers an alternative to those who think Sudoku's number is up. ■

DAN DOWN

VERDICT

Problem solvers will enjoy this innovative, if repetitive puzzler, best played in short, sharp brain-teasing bursts

7

IN-DEPTH

PQ: PRACTICAL INTELLIGENCE QUOTIENT

Pros: Find out how intelligent you are and compare your grey matter online

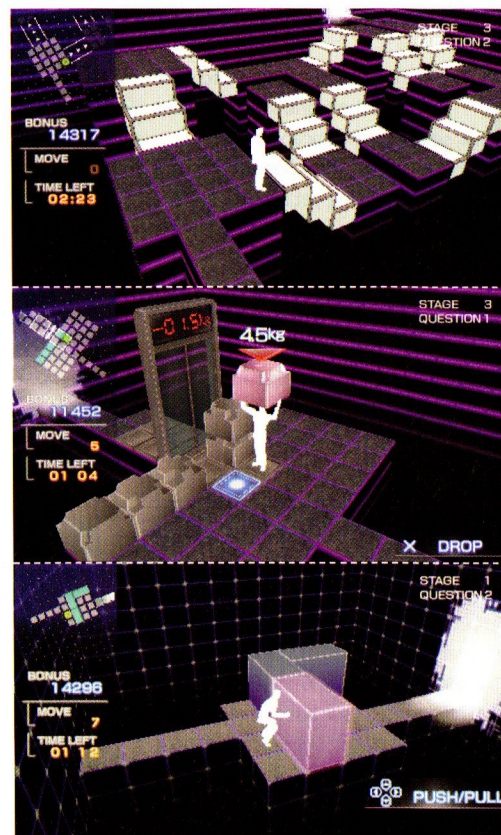
Cons: Puzzles can be a bit repetitive and doesn't take full advantage of your PSP's screen

Graphics: Functional. *Tetris*-like playing areas do the job

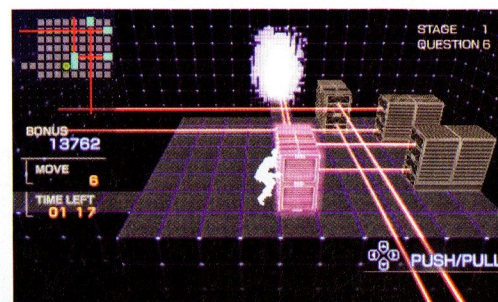
Sound: Unobtrusive backing music with solid sound effects

Gameplay: Great for quick, one-stage-at-a-time gaming

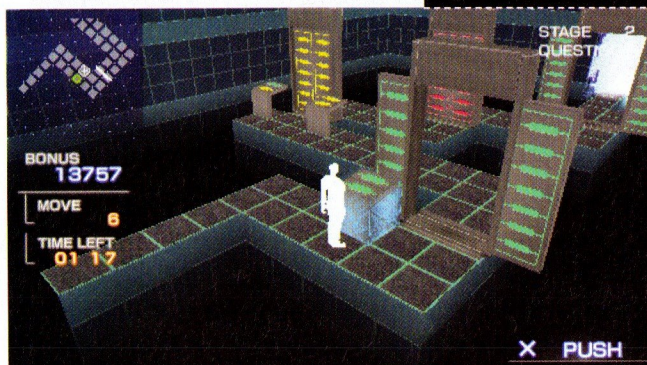
Lifespan: You could become obsessed with increasing your brainbox world ranking



In total there are 100 puzzle maps crammed into this brain teaser



"Grab the crystal, you've only got 30 seconds left, grab it, go!"



STREET RIDERS

SNIZZLE AND NITROS IN ONE GAME...
ARE THEY MAD?

● Publisher: Ubisoft ● Developer: Virtuos ● Price: £34.99 ● WiFi Multiplayer: Yes ● Downloads: No

From the moment you stick the UMD in your innocent little PSP's drive, a wall of gibberish hits you in the face. Seriously, the dialogue in this game is absolute nonsense. It's like you've paid to have Paul Danan sit in front of you and talk, just talk. It's lazy and, incomprehensibly, it's street slang via a boardroom committee, as is the gameplay.

On paper *Street Riders* would seem to have it all, and we're sure there's a bunch

as you shoot and boost your way to the finish line in a bid to conquer the streets. But it's not. Designing games by committee and ticking off the 'youth attractive' elements as you go, results in an unoriginal, limp and, frankly, offensive experience.

Controlling this mess works well enough and it's not a terrible-looking game, don't get us wrong. It's not in the eye-popping *Burnout/Ridge Racer/OutRun* hemisphere, but it's not appalling.

 **Designing games by committee and ticking off the 'youth attractive' elements, results in an unoriginal, limp and offensive experience**

of execs power-napping their way to a big bonus right now based on this rubbish. After a couple of hours of play you will have sat through the unnecessary shiny and violent intro, struggled to understand a word of the Ebonics-led dialogue, raced the streets, protecting your 'goods' from raiders and blown-up dozens of cars in a sub-*Burnout Legends* kind of a way.

On paper this should be a riot of infectious arcade racing and explosions

This is perhaps the biggest problem with *Street Riders*: as, though it has all the boxes ticked, it looks okay and handles well, there just isn't anything in here to surprise or entertain. In hindsight, perhaps they should have ticked the Paul Danan box, at least he's funny. ■ Ian Dean

VERDICT

A shameless attempt to cash-in on the current demand for urban street racing. Avoid this game-by-committee at all costs

3



Pimp Daddy

Your boss, the Big boss if you will, has been shot nine times (just like 50 Cent, wow!) and is something of a Godfather amongst the game's urbanites. He's protected your vest-wearing ass for years and now he wants to call in the favours. First up, you have to race and shoot through 66 dreary street-based missions, including protecting vans of 'merchandise', straight races and arena shootouts. The goal is to earn the coveted title of Street Cred. Secondly, he's gonna make yo' his bitch, holla back.

IN-DEPTH

STREET RIDERS

Pros: It's urban and has some very shiny cars to crash

Cons: Boring, predictable and shallow

Graphics: Shiny but basic-looking cars that can't compete with *Burnout*

Sound: Possibly the worst dialogue of any game, ever

Gameplay: Basic racing/shooting missions without any real flair

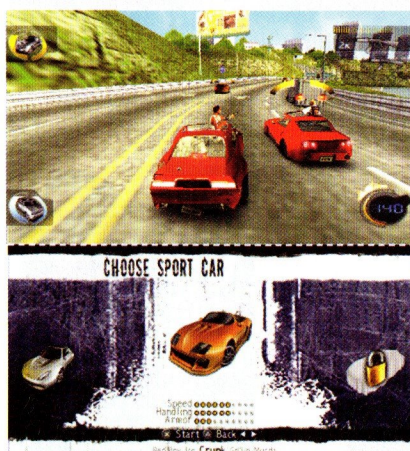
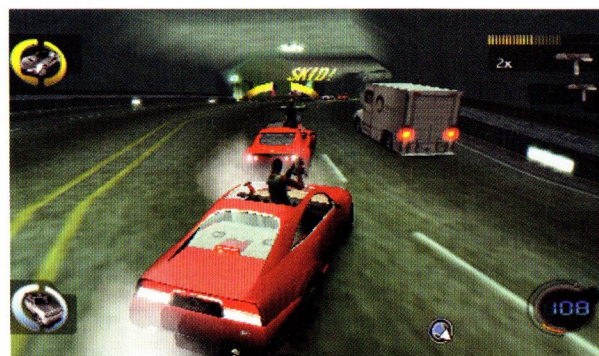
Lifespan: You'll likely turn it off before the intro cut-scene ends

4

2

4

2



It might look ok, but *Street Riders* is less fun than a Paul Dannon-heavy episode of *Celebrity Love Island*, and that's saying something



WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP POKER 2

FEATURING HOWARD LEDERER

IS A PSP **CLEVER ENOUGH** TO AVOID BEING BLUFFED?

● Publisher: Oxygen Interactive ● Developer: Point of View ● Price: £29.99 ● WiFi Multiplayer: Yes ● Downloads: No

Poker's rise in popularity, from backroom vice to Internet sensation, has not been hampered by the fact that most of us still have no idea how to actually play it – the official rules of *Texas Hold 'Em* are a million miles away from those you and your mates made up while playing for Smarties back when it was uncool.

But that's no reason not to dive in. A novice who picks up *World Championship Poker 2* could wind up monopolising the betting chips in any casino, if they put the work in. Because although it's been made for instant playability, there's everything you need to know about this popular form of gambling here. This is despite the fact that you'll be spending most of the game in a 3D environment



Players tend to be either enormously fat or skanky punks. We're not sure if this is the case in real life



When a friend suggests an evening of poker, you'll want to get your scuffed old deck of cards out and pour the Scotch; not sit around staring at your PSPs

full of overweight Americans and skinny guys with punk haircuts.

It's a very likeable package – an exhaustive amount of game styles can be tackled via Quick Play or the Career mode, which is ideal for learning the ropes. There are plenty of options, and even a perfunctory Create-A-Player screen, all accompanied by obligatory smooth jazz sounds and so-so animations. Up to eight players can

also get in on the action. Although this is a major selling point, it's a bit... pointless, really. When a friend suggests an evening of poker, you'll want to get your scuffed old deck of cards out, pour the Scotch and get out the cigars, not sit around staring at your PSP screens, however attractive they might be.

No, *World Championship Poker 2*'s real strength lies in solo play, especially for those who plan to learn enough to go online and start making some real dough. In which case, this game could end up paying for itself. ■ Jem Roberts



If only there was the option to pull out a sawn-off shotgun when things start going pear-shaped...

IN-DEPTH

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP POKER 2

Pros: Plenty of options, lots to learn from the Career mode

Cons: Animations can get tiresome, multiplayer is all-but pointless

Graphics: Basic stuff, but the animations are atmospheric enough

Sound: Smooth jazz stylings, but the commentary gets too repetitive

Gameplay: Rich with options; everything you need to learn the gambling trade

Lifespan: Initial obsession could lead to this being a fun time-waster

5

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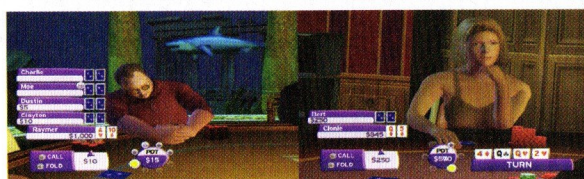
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VERDICT

While it lacks the personality of *World Poker Tour*, *WCP2* offers a pretty strong package for novices and experts alike

6



Look at that lying cow, she's bluffing! We wouldn't bet on it, though



Featuring Lederer Who?

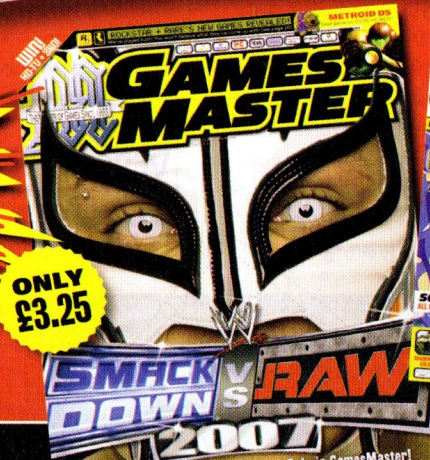
One clue that this is a hardcore title is the name of Howard Lederer on the front of the box. This guy is a legend among players, but a nobody to everyone else. After a childhood of family gambling fun, he rediscovered poker at his local chess club in New York, and honed his skills with all-nighters to become a world-beater. So listen to the man when he offers his advice during the high stakes rounds.

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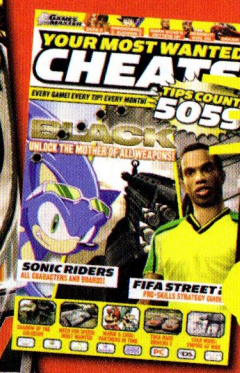


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TOM CLANCY'S SPLINTER CELL ESSENTIALS

THIS **MINI-ADVENTURE** IS ANYTHING BUT CRIMINAL

● Publisher: Ubisoft ● Developer: Ubisoft ● Price: £29.99 ● WiFi Multiplayer: Yes ● Downloads: No

Waiting patiently in the shadows for an ideal moment to silently eliminate an opponent doesn't exactly scream 'on-the-go gaming', but *Essentials* is an eye-opener. It takes the meticulous techno-stealth that made *Splinter Cell* famous and moulds it into an almost flawless hand-held experience.

Uncomplicated controls and compactly-designed levels make for some brilliantly edgy cat-and-mouse hunts, as Fisher chases down democracy-threatening scum the world over. It might be 1/8 of the normal scale but this stealth-'em-up is every bit as

scenarios; Fisher's early days as a Navy SEAL in Colombia one minute, government-sanctioned burglary of a penthouse apartment the next.

DEFENDER OF THE EARTH

What helps make protecting the free world so much fun is how easy it all is to control. Equipment such as binoculars and weapons are accessed effortlessly through the D-pad by tapping or holding buttons. With all Sam's kit so simple to use you're free to concentrate on the job at hand - slipping through the shadows and taking out terrorists without leaving a trace. Because the levels are so well



With all Sam's kit so simple to use you're free to concentrate on the job at hand - slipping through the shadows and taking out terrorists

addictive and absorbing as any *Splinter Cell* romp so far.

Confusingly, this is set after events played in the recently released *Double Agent* on PS2, with Fisher arrested following his less-than-patriotic bank robbery, terrorism and murder. As Government officials investigate old cases, missions from Sam's past are played out as flashbacks. It's a set-up that provides a wealth of self-contained

designed, Fisher's never more than a few yards from a guard to whack or a lock to pick. Even old locations lifted from previous games have been refined; you'll never be lost or wander in search of something to do.

Pick it up for a few minutes (or several hours) and you'll be caught up in edge-of-the-seat stealth and a twisting plot that gradually uncovers the motives behind Fisher's criminal turn for the worse. This is all told surprisingly well through comic book-style cut-scenes.

On the downside this is a cripplingly dark game. Without Sam's trademark night-vision goggles the screen is blacker than Satan's soul - you can't see anything. It's a shame because it means that 99% of the time you'll be viewing everything in a dingy, grainy-green

monochrome. It's still exciting, but after a while you do start to miss the wonderful gaming innovation of colour.

There are also occasional camera issues. It works perfectly while sneaking, but it's too cumbersome to deal with surprise gunfights. Unless you're already looking at the thug shooting at you, you'll be all kinds of dead before you find him.

These are small complaints though, for what is one of the most riveting adventures on PSP. We can confirm that *Splinter Cell* has been successfully shrunk. This isn't perfect but it is most definitely essential. ■ Leon Hurley

IN-DEPTH

SPLINTER CELL ESSENTIALS

Pros: Thrilling stealth, great controls and varied missions

Cons: Without night-vision goggles the screen is literally black

Graphics: Detailed environments and characters but all of it is too dark

Sound: A stirring *Chaos Theory* influenced score and atmospheric FX

Gameplay: As good as any of the console outings

Lifespan: A wealth of substantial missions and excellent multiplayer

7

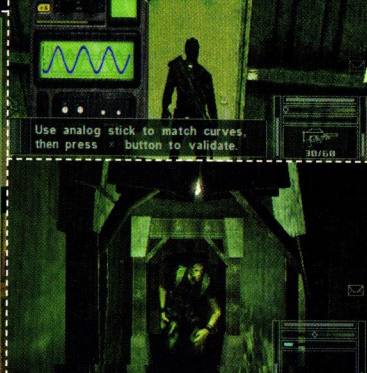
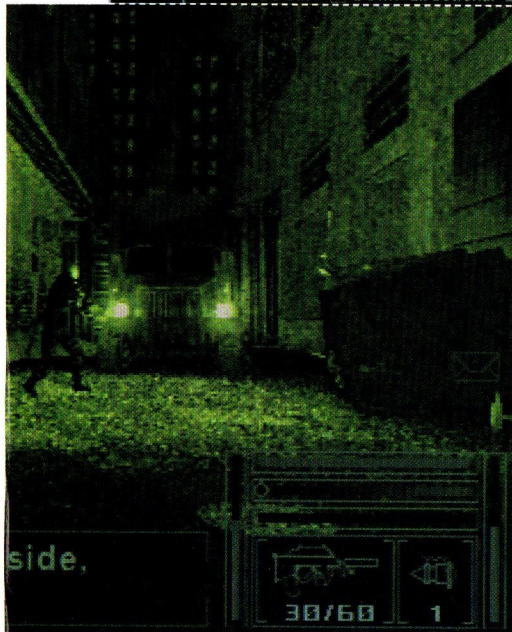
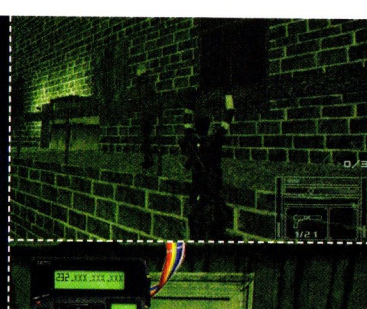
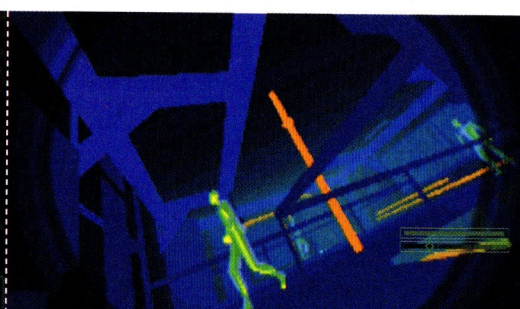
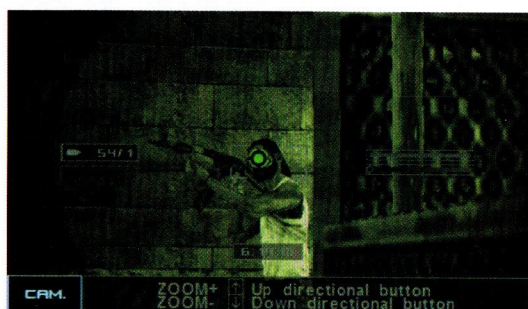
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Sam returns with his full repertoire of tricks and violent interrogation techniques. Abscend down to break and enter SEAL style (left). It's time to give this guy a cold shower (right) - or just knock him out



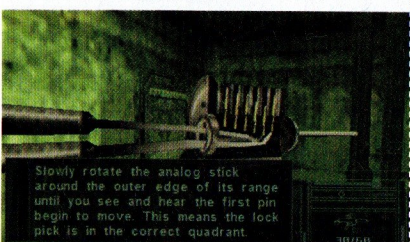
One of the few gripes with *Essentials* is that you'll be spending a lot of the game with night-vision activated – it's that dark



Spy Vs Spy

It's not the best Deathmatch mode on PSP, but *Splinter Cell Essentials*' *Spy Vs Spy* Deathmatch action does offer some respite from the shady stalking that makes up the bulk of the single-player game.

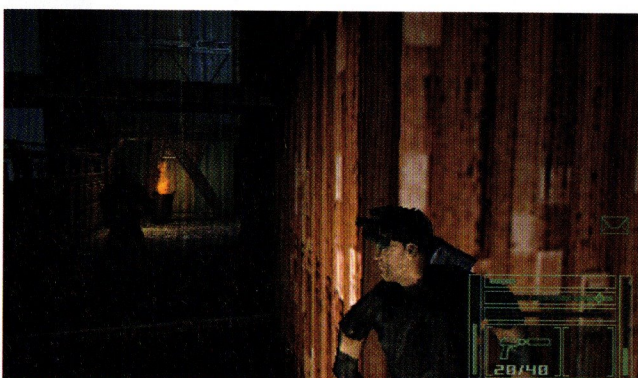
The problem with the *Spy Vs Spy* mode, though, is it's only for two players and is an action based multiplayer mode in a game that has controls and levels design built around stealth. The end result feels a little tacked on in order to boost the value of this PSP version of *Splinter Cell*. It's a shame, as *Pandora Tomorrow* was fantastic online.



Lock picking makes a welcome return (above). Without night-vision activated, you'll be picking out bad guys in near total darkness for much of the game (right)



"I told you not to buy those hexagonal Ikea clocks" (above). The usual array of visual settings for the goggles returns (top middle)



On Location

Here are some of the exciting locations Sam's flashback journey takes him

Sarah's Grave

Not really a proper mission but possibly the most morbid training level ever. Sam has to sneak into a cemetery to pay his respects at the grave of his daughter, Sarah, killed in a drink-driving accident.

Colombia

Set in Sam's pre-Third Echelon days, US and Colombian Forces mount a joint venture against big-time drug dealers. When Shetland is captured by the bad guys, Sam goes in alone to rescue him.

Oil Rig

Revisiting a level from the first *Splinter Cell*, this mission sees Sam following a technician around to steal the information he's carrying. Trouble is, the army is attacking the oil rig at the same time meaning the whole place is about to explode.

Zherkezh's penthouse

This is a mission from *Chaos Theory*. Sam needs to reach Zherkezh's place via the adjacent building before disabling the security systems and accessing the computers to discover the identity of a mysterious character called Dvorak.

Jail

Following the plot of *Double Agent*, this mission puts Sam in the clink as he busts out a crim called Jamie, to win the terrorist's trust. This is the first time Sam is faced with having to kill innocents to maintain his cover.

NSA HQ

This is again set during *Double Agent*. Working as a terrorist Sam has to infiltrate his old headquarters to tamper with case files. He also has a final meeting with Lambert.

MX VS ATV UNLEASHED: ON THE EDGE



OVER THE HILL AND OVER HERE – A PSP CONVERSION THAT SHOULD BE PUT DOWN

● Publisher: THQ ● Developer: Rainbow Studios ● Genre: Racing ● Release: Out Now ● Price: XXXXX ● WiFi Multiplayer: Yes ● Website: www.thq.co.uk ● Downloads: Yes No??

There's a guy in America, let's call him Chad. He likes anything you put petrol into. If you can race it and there's a slight chance of injury, then Chad loves it. There's a good chance Chad adores MX Vs ATV Unleashed: On The Edge – it ticks all his boxes. However, like grilled cheese balls and hog maws, not everything Chad likes should be accepted with open arms, and this goes for On The Edge. Apart from eight new tracks, there is very little to differentiate between this PSP version and the PS2 game released almost a year ago. This is the kind of conversion the PSP should have grown out of by now.

Playing On The Edge can be very frustrating, too. The PSP's d-pad doesn't really suit the Rhythm Racing system developer Rainbow Studios has been tailoring these last few years. Preloading the suspension by pushing



Like the PS2 version, On The Edge does have some plus points. In terms of content, this game is rammed to the rafters with indoor and outdoor tracks, stunt, motocross and point-to-point



A whopping eight new courses are available for us lucky PSP owners, it's a shame they're all as dull as the PS2 tracks.

forwards and quickly pulling down is tricky to perform at speed. Also, landing tricks and jumps seems quite haphazard on the small screen, taking away much of the game's appeal.

It's just not enough though. The PSP is home to some great racers and when other publishers are trying to create

IN-DEPTH

MX Vs ATV Unleashed: On The Edge

Pros: Packed with content and play modes

Cons: A flawed version of an old game

Graphics: Decent if unremarkable, this game will rarely leave you breathless

Sound: FMV radio rock and college punk tries to get the blood pumping, and fails

Gameplay: Good track design is marred by the game's irritating controls

Lifespan: There's plenty to do in here, though there's little encouragement to play it all

VERDICT

This is a flawed conversion of a year old PS2 game that simply doesn't deliver when quality releases like OutRun 2 are available.

5



Edgy Stuff

Where On The Edge earns some Brownie points is in the game content. There are some 50-plus tracks on offer, a variety of game modes, including Hill Climb, Way Point races and a Freestyle Stunt mode, plus monster trucks and 4x4 golf karts to unlock. On paper at least, On The Edge has it all. Unfortunately, this game isn't too thrilling to play and niggles with the controls chip away at the urge to see all there is to see.



You'll need special combinations to win the boss battles How to avoid the classic rolling boulder trap? Erm, stand to the side The whip-cracking vertical formation is your best means of attack

APE ESCAPE

THESE MONKEYS HAVE LOST THEIR MAGIC

● Publisher: Sony ● Developer: Sony ● Price: £29.99 ● WiFi Multiplayer: Yes ● Downloads: No

With *Metal Gear Solid 3*'s Snake Vs Monkey mode introducing a whole new generation of gamers to the joys of monkey-bagging, doing a PSP sequel must have seemed like a complete no-brainer.

Design some new levels, make some more plinky-plunk music, add a small ginger child for good measure and watch the cash roll in. And yes, superficially, *Ape Escape* seems perfectly suited to PSP – its soothing blend of primary colours, inventive gadgets and super-gentle puzzling are perfect on-the-go stuff. Actually netting the siren-headed simians is only half the battle – first you have to find a way to get to them, whether they're perched up a tree or riding shotgun on the back of a Tyrannosaurus Rex. It's lovely, nonsensical fun, and

there's even a raft of WiFi mini-games to keep monkey lovers happy – although Ping Pong and Boxing can't hold a candle to Monkey Soccer from *Ape Escape 2*.

But, even putting the lengthy mid-level loading pauses aside, there's trouble in monkey land. Using the PSP's nub feels clumsy at times, and bagging the nimbler chimps becomes a bit of a chore. The game camera isn't too clever either and makes a chorse out of catching monkeys in pants, which is a shame.

Ape Escape PSP isn't bad – but if we're going to hunt monkeys again, we'd rather use stun grenade. ■ Joel Snape

VERDICT

Metal-Gear-Solid monkey action this isn't, largely due to the lack of two steady analogue nubs. Buy it if you need apes on the move

6



This monkey is just petrified of this nutter with a gigantic ginger punk hair-do hdochasing after him



MEGA MAN POWERED UP

CAPCOM LEVELS DOWN WITH YET ANOTHER OUTING OF ITS MEGA MAN FRANCHISE

● Publisher: Capcom ● Developer: Capcom ● Price: £29.99 ● WiFi Multiplayer: No ● Downloads: No

We have to admire *Mega Man*'s perseverance. New games seem to arrive on an almost monthly basis, and by 'new' we mean 'slightly prettier'.

The trouble is, the actual game hasn't changed, or been much fun, since the late-'80s. It says a lot that this remake of the first 1987 *Mega Man* is tricky to tell

apart from the umpteen sequels. Jumping through block-filled landscapes while trying to avoid lethargic, meandering enemies has all the enjoyment of picking at a hangnail. Even the rudimentary level editor doesn't add much in the way of interest. The whole thing is just *too* retro to be any fun. Given the choice, we'd rather pick a hangnail. ■ Leon Hurley

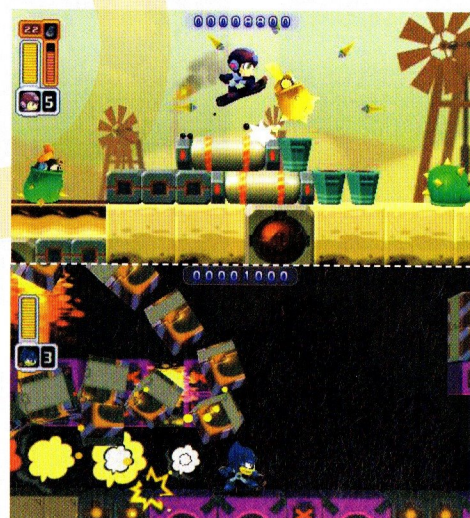
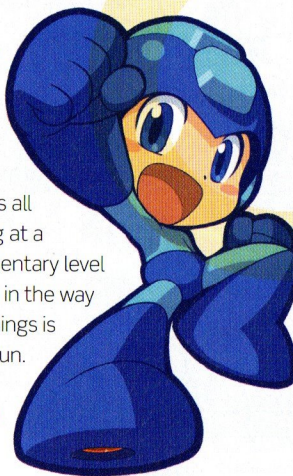
VERDICT

If you want to waste your life jumping around aimlessly for a few hours avoiding things, then this might be what you're looking for

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Gaming seems to have come full-circle with *Mega Man* – jumping between bland platforms



Classic NES style platforming devoid of even directional controls isn't really why you bought a PSP

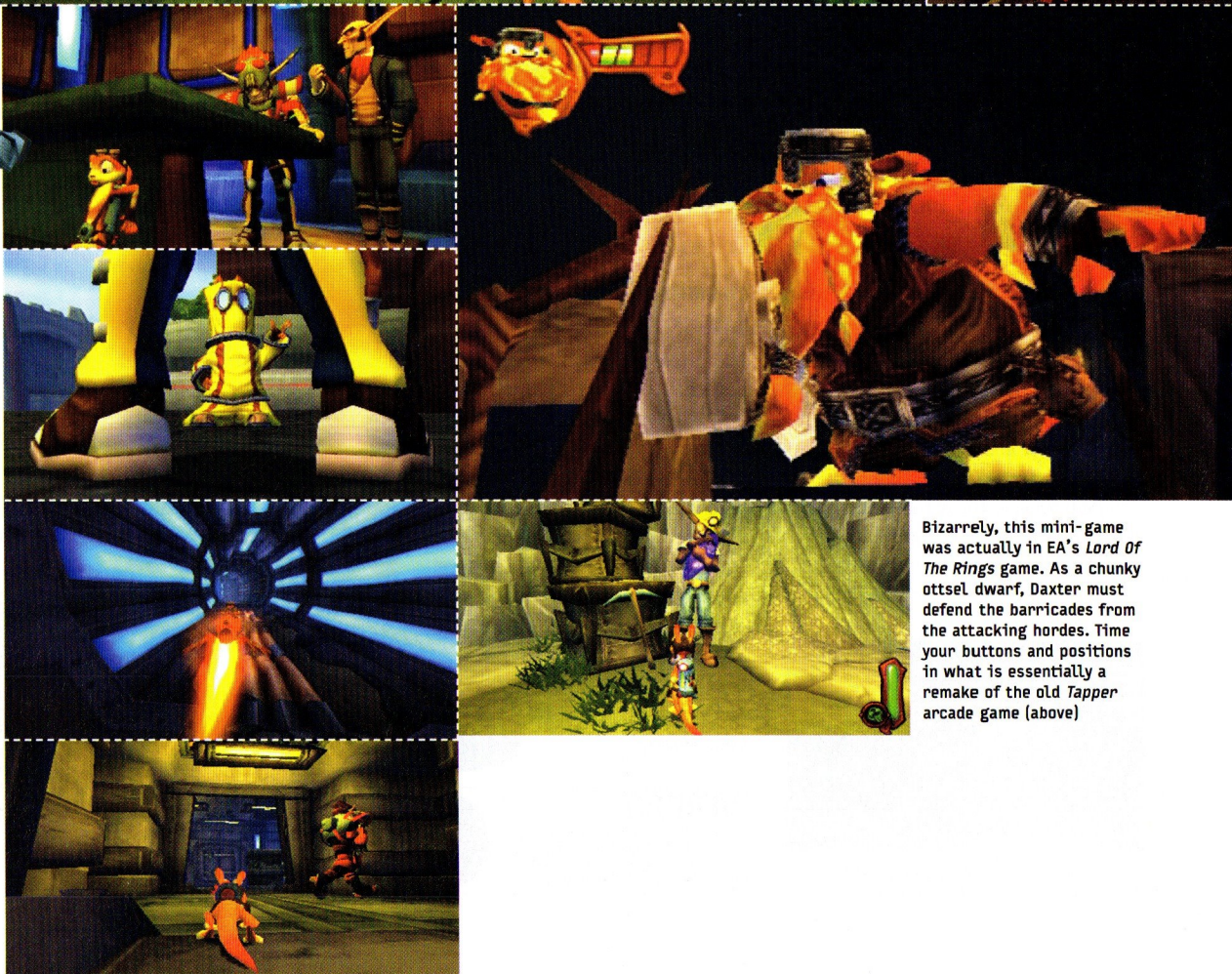


The ottsel with the hat is back, as Daxter steps into the leathery boots of his Indy-esque alter ego to whip bugs and snakes before they reach him. This isn't as rewarding as *The Matrix* parody, but still fun



Wiki-Wiki Wiki

The game features many different styles of play, from platform to melee combat to racing. It is the last of these that stands out as a PSP gimmick, as you can connect via WiFi to friends playing the recent *Jax: Combat Racing* on the PS2. Being able to link between the PSP and PS2 (PS3) games in this way is clearly a unique feature of the hand-held that will be exploited in more games to come and is another reason to buy a PS3. The races themselves are decent enough. Control is perfectly suited to the PSP's 'hub' analogue controller and the shoulder buttons control brakes and weapons. These vehicle games aren't the fastest you'll play on PSP, but they are incredibly smooth and detailed.



Bizarrely, this mini-game was actually in EA's *Lord Of The Rings* game. As a chunky ottsel dwarf, Daxter must defend the barricades from the attacking hordes. Time your buttons and positions in what is essentially a remake of the old *Tapper* arcade game (above)

Daxter

DAXTER FINALLY GETS HIS OWN GAME WITH AN ADVENTURE THAT WON'T DISAPPOINT

● Publisher: Sony ● Developer: Ready at Dawn ● Price: £29.99 ● WiFi Multiplayer: Yes ● Downloads: No

After years of living in the shadow of Jak, the ottsel Daxter finally has a game of his own. It's what fans have demanded for years. Let loose from the shackles of being the funny aside to Jak's annoying teen angst, Daxter delivers a sterling performance.

Set just before the opening of *Jak II*, this adventure offers a glimpse of what the little ottsel was up to before he rescued his buddy from the slammer. As it turns out Daxter was an exterminator. Story-wise this is a bit weak, but for a platformer it's a perfect premise for leaping around docks, lumber yards and factories in an effort to rid the inhabitants of Haven City from a new mechanical bug infestation.

Control freak

Daxter's controls are incredibly fluid and responsive. You'll be making pixel-perfect leaps within minutes of picking up the PSP. The camera is also a godsend – rarely will you get lost in the level and feel frustrated at not seeing where the next challenge is. Basics aside, the game adds layers of depth by demanding you experiment with Daxter's gas gun and upgrades; a flamethrower attachment enables the cheeky chap to glide and boost to higher platforms.

The levels have been suitably honed for PSP. *Jak and Daxter* made a name for itself by delivering huge environments and *Daxter* is no different: that is to say the stages *feel* big. Closer inspection shows the levels are fairly linear, however the design and visual style make everything feel larger than life.

This isn't to say *Daxter* doesn't impress, quite the contrary. Developer Ready at Dawn has ensured that at every turn there will be something to startle. Sneak out of a ventilation shaft and you'll see a gaping canyon or a giant fish chewing on icebergs will cross your path.

The game carries this need to constantly surprise through into the gameplay, which is varied to say the least. If the constant boosting and gliding gameplay doesn't get you, Daxter can

climb walls, race a hoverbike and hunt giant creepy-crawlies with a flyswatter. This combination of classic platforming, racing and combat will keep you hooked.

Of course none of this is original, which is Daxter's biggest stumbling block. This adventure is nicely balanced, looks stunning and is packed with variety, yet it all seems very familiar.

Despite all the vehicle missions, secret game modes and genuinely

impressive graphical treats, *Daxter* feels very... comfortable. It's easy too – you'll rarely struggle to overcome a jump, giant bug boss or puzzle. You'll coast through the game and have fun, but you won't feel challenged. ■

Ian Dean

VERDICT

A fine debut for Daxter, with large, exciting worlds coupled with varied gameplay. More of a challenge needed, though

8



Jak and Daxter made a name for itself by delivering huge environments and *Daxter* is no different: that is to say the stages *feel* big



Our ottsel buddy is a bit of a fantasist, which is handy because playing out mini-games in his dreams rewards you with extra health segments and moves. Collecting orbs hidden in the game will unlock new 'dream games'



The environments really are nicely filled with detailed scenery (top). A close-up of the ever-determined Daxter reveals just how intricate the character model is (above)

IN-DEPTH

Daxter

Pros: Great controls make every jump a joy, not a pain in the ottsel

Cons: Very familiar and lacking in any real challenge

Graphics: Big, bold and colourful, one of the best-looking games on PSP

Sound: Great voice acting and typically slick music

Gameplay: Perfect controls but let down by a lack of originality

Lifespan: Plenty to unlock but you'll complete it within days

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FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 3

THIS PINT-SIZED FIGHTER HAS GOT ALL THE RIGHT MOVES

● Publisher: EA ● Developer: EA Chicago ● Price: £34.99 ● Wi-Fi Multiplayer: Yes ● Downloads: No

When it comes to recreating boxing, EA has landed all the right punches with its *Fight Night* franchise. The dual analogue controls used in the recent PS2 version manages to make every swing, punch and weave feel natural.

So the big question is: how will this great control method translate to the PSP's lonesome singular analogue nub?

Using the analogue nub and face buttons, you can have surprisingly subtle control over hooks, uppercuts and the mighty haymaker

We dropped the UMD in tentatively and began to play. And you know what, it works. Using the nub to control movement, the shoulder buttons to enter defensive and weave stances and the face buttons to hit jabs, hooks and uppercuts, EA has created a halfway house between the PS2 and PSP set-up.

The only downside is that after days of being glued to the small screen, hammering haymakers, hooks and jabs, countering uppercuts and bobbing from yet another hefty blow from one of the many real-life boxers, your hands will turn to claws; mangled, contorted, boney claw-hands that are only good for one thing, playing *Fight Night*. EA's world domination continues.

The claw-hand syndrome is a testament to just how good this conversion is. The career mode has all

of the options expected; contract fights, trainers for hire, stat development and hundreds of new shorts, gloves and moves to unlock. Extra modes, such as repeat history, change history and my history, add a little fun as you drop in and out of classic fights, changing the course of time with a right hook.

The only downside to the whole show is the difficulty level. You'll have to wade

through dozens of low-rent boxers to meet a real challenge and the result is a somewhat artificial lifespan.

Sure, *Fight Night Round 3* is another PS2 conversion, but one that has been perfectly tailored to the PSP's limited controls. There are few better beat-'em-ups on the PSP. ■

Ian Dean

VERDICT

Great use of the PSP's controls are matched by an involving career mode. The lack of a real contender to challenge is the only let down

8

IN-DEPTH

FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 3

Pros: Great controls and a deep career mode

Cons: You'll wade through the fodder within days

Graphics: Slick, nicely animated and packed with detail

Sound: Dozens of licensed tunes and hyperactive commentators

Gameplay: An intuitive combo system brings the bruises to life

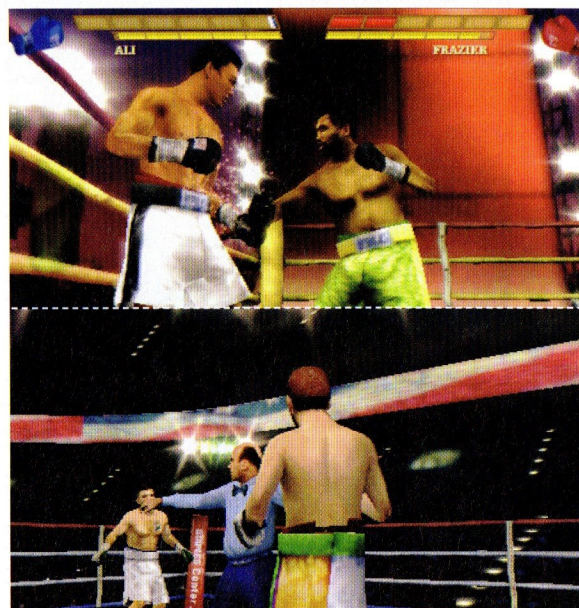
Lifespan: A great career mode, Wi-Fi bouts and bonus mode, plenty to do

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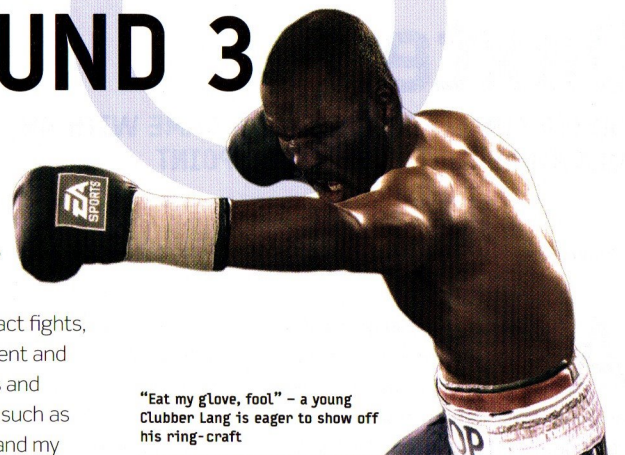
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Relive famous fights between legendary boxers, such as the gruelling 1971 duel between Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier – just try to settle the battle before claw-hand syndrome strikes



"Eat my glove, fool" – a young Clubber Lang is eager to show off his ring-craft



Fight Night 3 isn't just about crashing satisfying left hooks onto your opponent's head – the bright lights and glory of the ring are just as addictive, not to mention the bikini-clad babes...



Overnight Sensation

Learning the movement and pattern to your opponents is crucial to smacking your way to the title. Here are some basic boxer types you'll meet on the way to the top...

Hookers

These guys will be nifty on their feet and aim to catch you off-guard with a series of hooks coming from down below. Once you understand their rhythm, you can counter the hits with ease.

Clubbers

These are big hitters who rely on the haymaker to take you down. If you can parry and dodge the big hits they'll be dead on their feet by the third round.

Stamina fighters

These boxers require patience to defeat. They can soak up the hits and are hard to KO. The best strategy is to keep targeting the same side of the face and win on a technicality.

PlayStation 2

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WORLD

EXCLUSIVE

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2007

WRESTLING GOES WILD ON PS3

ALSO GOD OF WAR II
ACTION SEQUEL LOOKING OLYMPIAN

"DANTE, KISS ME YOU FOOL!"

INSIDE THE PECULIAR WORLD OF PS2 FAN FICTION

URBAN CHAOS REVIEWED

RIOT NOT SO MUCH PREDICTED AS GUARANTEED

PLAYABLE ON THE DISC

HITMAN: BLOOD MONEY

OUTRUN 2006: COAST 2 COAST

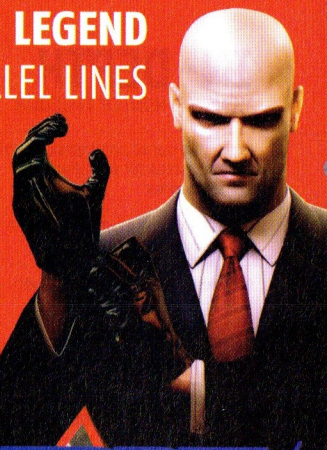
TOMB RAIDER: LEGEND

DRIVER PARALLEL LINES

SONIC RIDERS

BLACK

...AND MORE



ON SALE 20 APRIL



MONSTER HUNTER FREEDOM

BUT WHO'S THE REAL MONSTER? OH, ACTUALLY, NEVER MIND...

● Publisher: Capcom ● Developer: Capcom ● Price: £34.99 ● WiFi Multiplayer: Yes ● Downloads: Yes

Should Ernest Hemingway be alive and playing PSP games today, he'd be playing *Monster Hunter*. Other games make you soft with their thermal goggles and sniper rifles, medipacks and Gatling guns – but not this one. No, *Monster Hunter* gives you a pair of leather hotpants and a knife, points you in the direction of some enormous lizards and leaves you to get on with it. Cooking utensils optional, natch.

Monster Hunter on PS2 was something of a sleeper, popular in Japan but scuppered by its reliance on online play. For this PSP revamp, Capcom have played to its strengths and delivered a

into the badlands. Realistically, though, the first thing you're going to do is foolishly accept a contract to kill half a dozen velociraptors.

Like a lot of PS2 to PSP conversions, *Monster Hunter's* control system has been hugely simplified to fit the handhelds smaller range of buttons. Camera control and inventory selection work fine, but fighting – previously done with the right analogue stick – has been reduced to light/heavy slashes, and feels a lot more basic than before. Fortunately, there's more to it than that – the actual meat of the combat system is getting the beasts into a position where they're



FOUR PLAYERS CAN GANG TOGETHER OVER AD HOC TO TACKLE SOME OF THE GAME'S FIERCEST CREATURES – THE TACTICAL POSSIBILITIES INCREASE DRAMATICALLY

game that still offers multiplayer options, but works more accessibly alone.

Basically, you hunt monsters. Starting in a little village, you wander around accepting side-quests and chatting to peasants, then venture out into the surrounding fields. Early on, it's safest to simply accept a gathering quest, foraging for mushrooms or smaller animals. It's typical RPG stuff, getting you started on goldfish and herbs and allowing you to build up your sword sharpness and manoeuvring skills before you venture

vulnerable to your frenzied slashing. This might mean waiting until they stray away from the rest of their herd, luring them to you with bait or scaring the crap out of them with flash-bangs. Plan your kills well enough and you'll even have time to skin and gut your scaly victims.

It's atmospheric, often tense stuff, helped by the fact that *Freedom* looks astonishing – knee-high grass gives way to bleak mountain tops and lava, with huge beasts trotting around all over the place. The music – coming in full Dolby Surround – helps out, establishing a new sound that can only really be described as 'Celtic Survival Horror'.

Where *Monster Hunter* really comes into its own, though, is in Ad Hoc mode. With a couple of party members carrying lances and hammers and the rest tooled up with muskets, the tactical possibilities increase dramatically. Alone, *Monster Hunter's* pretty good, but with friends it veers towards the excellent. Hemingway would definitely approve. ■ Joel Snape

IN-DEPTH

MONSTER HUNTER FREEDOM

Pros: Well-paced and ingenious, with plenty of scope for some inventive animal slaughter

Cons: There isn't much of a story, if you care about that sort of thing

Graphics: Astonishing for PSP, with a huge range of environments

Sound: Listen out for the squeals of 'Wimmm tasty!'

Gameplay: More in-depth than simply gutting the odd furry critter

Lifespan: Good alone, but even better with friends

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VERDICT

Exceptional graphics and deep gameplay ensures this is the best PSP RPG yet. Forget *Ape Escape*, go after some proper beasts

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Who would have thought that rare dinosaur skin and bone would have been so lucrative? It's off to market with the latest captures (below). So it's velociraptor-burgers for lunch then, eh? (Left)



If playing WiFi with friends, it can be useful to send one unfortunate party member out as bait to lure forward your prey



The wyverns will be tough work if you're armed with just a sword. Shooting holes in their wings is a good way to ground them before you move in for the kill



Great White Hunters

Combat in *Monster Hunter* is simple: prod to yank out your thighbone-sized slicing implement, then tap it some more to slash away at your foes' fleshy underbellies. Once they're down, gut 'em senseless...

Here be monsters

You haven't got a pith helmet or a blunderbuss, but you *have* got a mean glint in your eye and a world of helpless wildlife to kill...

Kelbi

These beautiful deer are harmless, friendly denizens of the forest, frolicking and joyful to be alive. Gut them and steal their skin for easy points.

Boar

Their pig-like little siblings are easy meat, but these tram-sized porkers are somewhat tougher. Wait for the charge, then butcher them and nick their tusks.

Velociprey

Roaming in packs, these are some of the toughest enemies you'll encounter in the first half of the game. Slash the dino's necks and then sell their bits for trinkets.

Wyverns

This is where things get really tricky - wyverns are airborne, which means you'll need something more advanced than a sword. We suggest a flechette launcher and a keen eye.

SYPHON FILTER: DARK MIRROR

Blasting through the looking glass, this smash hit for PSP shows just what the future holds

● Publisher: Sony ● Developer: Sony Bend ● Price: £34.99 ● WiFi Multiplayer: Yes ● Downloads: No

We're 15 minutes into the action and we've already lost count of how many people we've killed. We're using gun-turrets to mow down soldiers like skittles, exacted make-shift tracheotomies on guards who probably didn't need it (especially not with a hunting knife) and right now as one hand types the other

swarming with east-European hitmen, really pulls you into the action. And once inside, the sheer diversity won't let you go.

There are innumerable stand-out moments that show off the developer's keen ideas, like protecting the shell-shocked Private Janzen and guiding him through pitch-black areas by shining your torch over ledges and the like. This bit in



It's no exaggeration to proclaim *Dark Mirror* as one of the great games on PSP. The best thing about the game, is that the enemies die exactly like they should

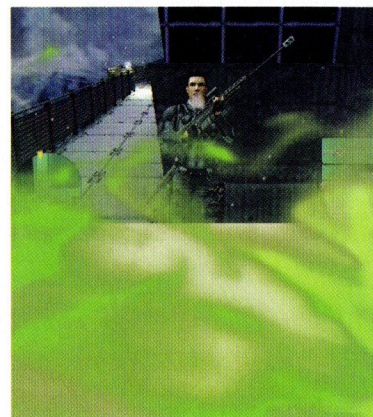
is holding the tortured screams of our latest electro-shock victim. And, yep, the voltage has just burst him into flames. Lovely stuff. But such is our immune system to all things 'violent', we're sprinting to a new objective to find Gabe's next prey. It's a brutal world in *Syphon Filter: Dark Mirror* – where you shoot first and ask questions later.

It's no exaggeration to proclaim *Dark Mirror* as one of the great games on PSP. Seriously, there's very little to get annoyed about here – well, except towards the end where the game is suddenly overthrown by swear-inducing difficulty. Just guiding Gabe (and at times Lian) around locations ranging from industrial playgrounds, which are full of ladders and air-ducts, to flashy casinos

particular provides you with a sense of camaraderie and teamwork as you bark commands (by hitting select), telling him when to run for cover and when to follow. At one point, you even have to provide Janzen with covering fire as he crosses a toxic spill.

Go-go Gadgets

Elsewhere, if you thought that James Bond was top dog for gadgets, then think again – Gabe Logan's array of tools is more varied than a B&Q warehouse. As well as having an assault rifle that can fire explosive darts and his trusty high-voltage tazer, he's also got an RTL (Rapid Traversal Line), which enables you to utilise zip-lines and a choice selection of eyewear from night-vision to infra-red



goggles. He's also got a pair of EDSU specs (Electronic Device Sensing Utility) to help spot hidden devices or weapons scattered about the place. You'll need them too, in order to check for mine-connected trip-wires.

All these things can be flicked through smoothly thanks to the carefully mapped out controls, and handily, your inventory pauses the game so you don't get riddled with lead while searching for a weapon with some ammo in it. While we're on the subject of munitions, it's worth mentioning that almost every bullet needs to count – shells are dispensed of quicker than at a tortoise strip-club. You'll have to scramble around in refill crates or corpse's pockets every few minutes, which is a tad annoying, but there's plenty of ammo about the place.

The best thing about *Dark Mirror* is that the enemies die exactly like they should. For example, if you're reeling off shotgun blasts from a long distance then your target will feel like he's being pelted with hot rice. Annoying, but not exactly deadly. But if you get up close and personal and fire a single buckshot to the chest – two if they're packing body armour – it will wipe them out. The same rule applies to headshots; even a pistol fired from range will fell an opponent in one, even if it's an end of level boss. And all these kills can be carefully orchestrated as you aim from cover – a box, a statue, it doesn't matter as you fly through *Dark Mirror*'s 30 missions.

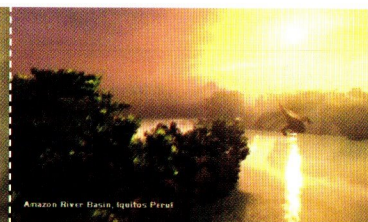


Pesky snipers hiding up on the roof. How come they're never easy to spot and standing out in the open wearing bright colours, eh? (above)





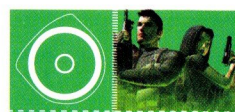
A shoot-out in a library, better not use the flame thrower (top). Gun turrets make mincemeat of enemy heavies (above left)



Flying by chopper at dusk, takes us back to the 'Nam (above)



Gabe Logan's packing more tools than Alan Titchmarsh (above). Cover, oh sweet friend cover (left)



Fire Wall

Syphon Filter: Omega Strain on PS2 tried to bring Gabe and his buddies online, but quite frankly it was pants. It was all about co-op play with just (yawn) four other people. Thankfully, Sony has had another stab with Dark Mirror and now you'll get the chance to blast up to eight of your virtual friends in the face, or leg, or arm, or groin... sweet. There are four types of online games to play. You've got the typical solo and Team Deathmatches, and then there's Objective mode – a squad game where, for example, one group has to disarm bombs and the others have to stop them. And lastly, there's Rogue Agent where everyone starts on the same team and suddenly one member can kill the rest, thus initiating a manhunt for the traitor in the pack. All this and it still runs as great as it does in offline mode.



Although at times it does feel like a Tin Can Alley experience (you duck, spring out and shoot soldiers as they pop-up) it's not just enemy grunts waiting around every corner. Nope, there are new puzzles and even tougher adversaries to overcome right the way through to the end. One moment you have to press corresponding computer switches as you trace the movements of an electrician crawling in the vents above with your infra-red specs. And the next, you're calling in Lian to turn off a gas chamber before you snuff it.

The foes that you come across could be anything from a Sherman tank, a fella



walls as you progress through burnt out buildings, snowflakes whistle about your ears as you take down another troop of soldiers and each stage has been meticulously designed to show intricacies like great draw-distances displayed during sniper battles.

This really is a quality piece of software and shows – along with the likes of *SOCOM* and *Daxter* – that Sony is getting to grips with its latest console.



With a few clipping issues aside, *Dark Mirror* looks lush. Each stage has been meticulously designed to show intricacies like great draw-distances in sniper battles

in special armour who can only be killed after you short circuit its force-field, or a cheeky bloke who nicks your unique assault rifle and uses it against you. It's definitely more than a repetitive plod through lacklustre missions.

Smallscreen wonder

With a few clipping issues aside, *Dark Mirror* looks lush, too. Flames lick the

Every corner seems to yield another surprise, more colourful explosions and radiant environments. Even the cut-scenes are run in a glossy FMV style. But it's the scope of the ideas on offer that really sets this apart from other PSP games out there.

Cynics could easily dismiss this as a bunch of action clichés that we've all seen before. But it's the way that these things have been sewn together that marks down *Dark Mirror* as one of the titles really demonstrating the potential of PSP. It's not just a dumbed-down port of an old PS2 game, it's a classic in its own right and offers you a real rollercoaster ride of gun-play and stealth – neither of which feel forced. There's even a solid Online mode to keep things fresh (see 'Fire Wall').

You won't be disappointed with *Syphon Filter: Dark Mirror* even if the story is as bland as dry toast. Chances are that you'll be too lost in the killing spree to care. ■ Nathan Irvine

VERDICT

For such a complex game *Dark Mirror* controls incredibly well and looks amazing, too. This essential PSP purchase sets new standards

9



Total Control

We were initially worried about how *Dark Mirror* would handle without two sticks to strafe and look, but things have worked out fine. Your stick is used to move and X, Triangle, Square and Circle are to aim. The D-pad is used to access special tasks: Up climbs boxes and uses computer, Down ducks and enables you to crawl through tunnels, Left enables you to slip on some neat night-vision goggles and Right brings up your essential weaponry (see 'Boot Camp'). Although it's quite fiddly at first, you'll soon grasp the many controls and be cycling weapons on-the-fly in no time at all.



IN-DEPTH

Syphon Filter: Dark Mirror

Pros: Great controls, slick visuals and plenty of action

Cons: The script is very hammy, tired even

Graphics: Richly detailed and smoothly animated, the best PSP has seen

Sound: Rattling gunfire and a suitably rampant musical score

Gameplay: A sweet mixture of action, stealth and platforming

Lifespan: Not the hardest game in the barracks, but online play works a treat

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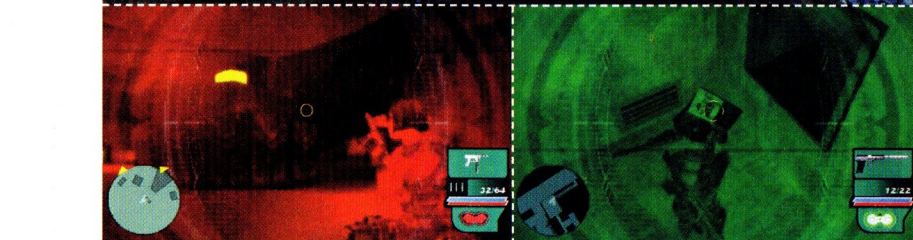
10



The effects of his new Lynx deodorant had some explosive effects (left)



New Objective: Eliminate 4 Snipers



The themed green and red rooms didn't please the occupants in the latest episode of *Changing Rooms* (left)



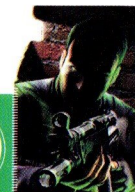
Five large boxes to take out here, can't be too hard to achieve (below)



Unman turret

Uzi taken

Revolutionary Soldier: Back up, I need back up!



Boot Camp

One thing that demands attention in *Dark Mirror* is the distinctive types of weapons on offer. The difference between coming through a mission unscathed or looking a bit like a colander is all down to the guns you select. Here's a briefing on the tools of the trade:

Stealth

Trying not to blow your cover? Then un-holster your silenced weapons and aim for the noggin. Better still, sneaking up behind an unsuspecting soldier with your knife in hand will finish the job quietly and efficiently.

Close Quarters

Most pistols are handy for up-close combat, but the undisputed winner has to be the tazer. It can stop an enemy instantly and the voltage can even flambé them if you hold the Right Trigger long enough. Great fun!

From A Distance

The sniper is king. But team it up with the gas, electric shock and explosive darts and you've got a serious piece of kit on your hands.

When Pinned Down

Nothing clears a room like an assault rifle - well unless it's a load of frag grenades. This baby loosens off rounds quickly and accurately enabling you to easily mow down the bad guys.



The Tazer can be used to stun an opponent



Or hold the button down to fry the guy



Job done - time to find the next goon



With special moves and effects that even make *Street Fighter Alpha 3 Max* look tame, *Red Hot Rumble* delivers exactly what we want from a beat-'em-up (top). The crazy variety of levels means the scenery is as varied as the action – you even fight on top of planes! (above, middle)



What's Happening?

A quick look at some of the zany objectives you'll be given in each scene

Collect the gems

Fairly straightforward this one. Run around the level and swipe all the glittering power-ups before your greedy opponent.

Defeat the enemies

The bad-guys never had it so, er, bad. You and your foe duke it out to see who can be more of a hero by dispatching more enemies.

Grab the flag

One flag, two opponents and a ticking clock – make sure you're the one left holding the thing when the time runs out.

Boss battles

Inflict more damage on the level's head-honcho to be crowned winner of this one. Don't forget, you'll pick up a massive bonus if you can land the finishing blow.



Viewtiful Joe's main selling point is its multiplayer mayhem. There are enough multiplayer gameplay modes to ensure you and your mates will be highly competitive for hours on end (top)



Boss battles are suitably extreme and in multiplayer become a frenzied scrap to see who can cause the boss the most damage (top). *Viewtiful Joe's* vibrant visuals are perfectly suited to PSP's pin-sharp screen (above)

VIEWTIFUL JOE: RED HOT RUMBLE

CAPCOM'S **SUPER-FAST SUPERHERO** GOES HAND-HELD

● Publisher: Capcom ● Developer: Clover Studio ● Price: £34.99 ● WiFi Multiplayer: Yes ● Downloads: No

Nine times out of ten something this colourful and super-deformed needs its own Japanese translator and a 1,000 page back-history manual to make it half-playable. Thankfully, *Viewtiful Joe* has always been a bright slice of Eastern genius, simple enough to appeal to gamers the world over. *Red Hot Rumble* is the wannabe super-hero's first outing on PSP, and he's slotted straight into the role like a digital glove.

The action is incredibly smooth, you can sprint your tiny action-actors across the hand-held's widescreen in a quest to bag more crazy items, beat up more enemies, or simply knock the living daylight out of a single opponent. Each encounter is sliced up neatly into short scenes, which means you can play the game whenever you can snatch a spare second, and the objectives are varied enough to keep you coming back for one more scrap.

The only real problem with *Red Hot Rumble* is that the game manages to fill the screen with too many objects and coloured trinkets, making it occasionally confusing and frustrating when you're trying to snatch those vital few points away from your opponent. Even without these off-putting moments, the game is seriously tough to beat, and once you've passed the first couple of missions it becomes a real challenge to progress.

Fans of all things anime will want to persist, even if it does mean breaking a few buttons on your PSP. There's a host of genuinely collectable unlockable bits and pieces to be had, including the chance to play as a cartoon version



One gripe with the game is that it's often difficult to see what is going on because of the lightning pace and stupendous special effects filling the screen



Red Hot Rumble's starring role is reserved for its multiplayer modes, which enable four players to scrap over their WiFi connections

of Dante from the demon-busting blockbuster *Devil May Cry*. As well as the extra cast members, playing through the story mode will open up some tricky mini-games that will seriously test your side-scrolling skills.

However, *Red Hot Rumble's* starring role is reserved for its multiplayer modes, which enable four players to scrap over their WiFi connections. It's some of the most intense, miniature man-on-man fighting available on hand-held and each encounter seems to go down to the wire because there's so much craziness happening on the screen at once. If you're after something more intense than a turn-based RPG, more colourful than yet another generic racer, and a

game that has bright colours bursting out of every sequence, then grab yourself a copy and a few mates, and get ready to rumble. ■ Andy Hartup

VERDICT

Wonderfully colourful and stuffed with wacky action, *Red Hot Rumble* is great for flying solo, but damn near essential in multiplayer

8

IN-DEPTH

VIEWTIFUL JOE: RED HOT RUMBLE

Pros: Fast paced and as smooth as Clooney in an Armani suit

Cons: Can be tough to keep track of everything that's happening on-screen

Graphics: Fantastic anime-style characters and backgrounds

Sound: The wealth of crazy sounds create a great atmosphere

Gameplay: Fast, furious, and occasionally very confusing

Lifespan: Tough single-player and excellent WiFi options

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Comic book-style anime cut-scenes add a touch of sensible narrative to the multi-coloured mayhem of the action

Dragon Ball Z: Shin Budokai

GREAT BALLS OF FIRE, *DRAGON BALL* MAKES A WELCOME PSP DEBUT

● Publisher: Atari ● Developer: Dimps ● Price: £34.99 ● WiFi Multiplayer: Yes ● Downloads: No

The title for best PSP fighting game is still up for grabs. Early contender *DarkStalkers* was always an outside bet, while both *Fight Night Round 3* and *Street Fighter Alpha 3 MAX* should have stolen the crown but faltered in the final round, blaming their

into these powerful attacks and so the series has failed to impress.

But, surprisingly, this simplistic system excels on the PSP's restrictive D-pad. The frustrating complex combos of *Street Fighter* are forgotten and you're left to



The bouts of combat are fast and smooth and there is a smidgen of tactical thought behind when and where to ignite the epic super moves

tools as they wept out of the ring. Fighting fans need *Tekken*. Now.

However, next up to challenge for the title is *Dragon Ball Z: Shin Budokai*. This series has always been a firm fan favourite but failed to gain any real notoriety due to the simplistic, super-move-led Ki combat system. Essentially, each player races to build up their Ki super meter, which enables their character to move faster and launch one of several screen-destroying super moves. There is very little skill to tapping

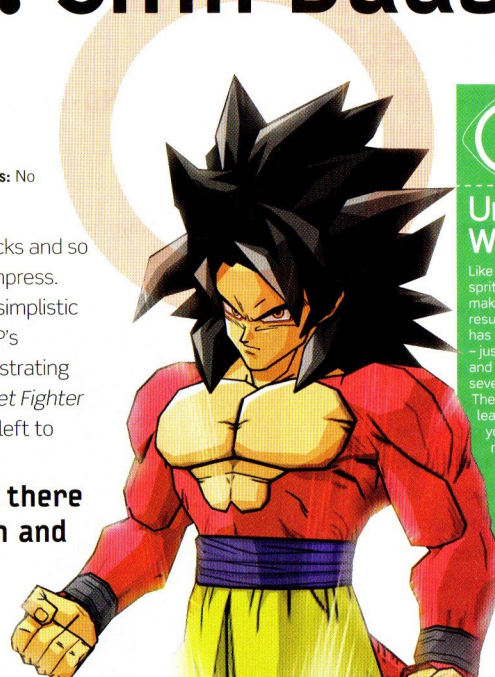
wallow in the glorious cel-shaded fireball destruction of the *Dragon Ball* series. The bouts of combat are fast and smooth, and there is a smidgen of tactical thought behind when and where to ignite the epic super moves.

Let's not get carried away, though. Despite the gameplay working well, this is a shallow experience. Unlockable trading cards gravitate around the core game modes to entice the hardcore to collect everything, but it's not enough to save it from being yet another PSP contender to stumble. ■ Ian Dean

VERDICT

A simplistic fighter that suits the PSP perfectly, and yet somehow, it's the same basic gameplay that ruins any long-term appeal

7



Unleash The Warrior Within

Like a cheap date hooched-up on spritzers, *Shin Budokai* doesn't make you work too hard to get a result. The game's combo system has always been very simplistic – just tap the 'Ki button' (Ⓢ) and a direction to initiate one of several blazing special moves. The only tactical angle to this is learning to judge when to drain your energy meter to use the move, because if you run out your character will be left completely defenceless. It's not quite as involved as *Street Fighter Alpha 3 MAX* but still adds a much needed degree of tactical thought to the game.



IN-DEPTH

DRAGON BALL Z: SHIN BUDOKAI

Pros: The simple combo system is ideally suited to PSP's hateful D-pad

Cons: Still, it's too limited and fails to impress beyond a casual bout or two

Graphics: The cel-shaded style and anime influenced specials look stunning

Sound: Hyperactive anime voice acting sprinkles everything with authenticity

Gameplay: The fast-paced combat works but lacks deeper appeal

Lifespan: Plenty of *Dragon Ball* collectables to unlock

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Anime lovers rejoice: *Shin Budokai* has some of the smoothest cel-shaded animation we've seen and couples it with suitably over-the-top supers that make Zangief's spinning pile-driver look tame



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C = 03
Call of Duty 2 Big Red One
Call of Duty: Finest Hour
Chronicles of Narnia
Cold Winter
Conflict: Global Storm
Conflict: Vietnam
Crash B'oot: Wr. of Cortex
Crash Tag-Team Racing
D = 04
Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX2
Destroy All Humans
Devil May Cry
Devil May Cry 3
Die Hard: Vendetta
Dragon Ball 2: Budokai T.
Dragon Quest VIII: JOTCK
Drakensang 2
Driver: Parallel Lines

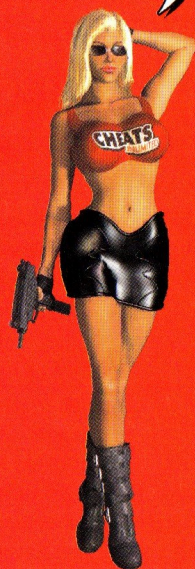
Dropship
E = 05
Ecco the Dolphin
Enter the Matrix
Escape from Monkey Island
Extinction
F = 06
FIFA 2006
FIFA Street 2
FIFA Street Soccer 2
Fight Club
Fight Night Round 3
Final Fantasy X-2
Final Fantasy
G = 07
Getaway
Getaway 2: Black Monday
Ghost Hunter
Ghost Recon 2
Gladiator: S. of Vengeance
Godfather
Goldeneye: Rogue Agent
Gran Turismo 3
Gran Turismo 4
Grand Theft Auto 3
Grand Theft Auto: L.C.S.*
Grand Theft Auto: San A.
Grand Theft Auto: Vice City
Gun
H = 08
Harry Potter: Goblet of Fire
Headhunter: Redemption
Heroes of the Pacific
Hitman 3: Contracts
I = 09
Incredibles
J = 10
Jak 3

Juiced
K = 11
King Kong (Peter Jackson's)
L = 12
L.A. Rush
Lara Craft T.Raider Legend
Lara Craft: A. of Darkness
Lego Star Wars
LMA Manager 2004
LMA Manager 2005
M = 13
Mafia
Manhunt
Marc Ecco's Getting Up
Matrix: Path of Neo
Max Payne 2
Maximo
Medal of Honor: Euro. Ass.
Medal of Honor: R. Sun
Metal Gear Solid 3: S.Eater
Midnight Club 3: DE Remix
Midnight Club 3: DUB Ed.
Monkey Island, Esc. from
Mortal Kombat: Deception
N = 14
NBA Street v3
Need for Speed M.Wanted
Need for Speed: Undergr.
Need for Speed: Underground 2
NFL Street 2
O = 15
Onimusha 3: Demon Siege
Operation Winback
P = 16
Predator: Concrete Jungle
Premier Manager 2003
Primal
Prince of Persia: 2 Thrones
Prince of Persia: W. Within

Pro Evolution Soccer 5
Project Snowblind
R = 18
Ratchet & Clank 2
Red Faction
Red Faction 2
Res. Evil: Code Veronica X
Res. Evil: Outbreak File #2
Resident Evil 4
Resident Evil: Outbreak
Ref. to Castle Wolfenstein
Rumble Roses
Run Like Hell
S = 19
Shadow Hearts: Covenant
Shadow of the Colossus
Silent Hill 2
Silent Hill 4: The Room
Sims 2
Smackdown vs Raw
Smackdown vs Raw 2006
Sonic Heroes
Sonic Mega Collection Plus
Spartan: Total Warrior
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SSX On Tour
Star Wars Episode III
Star Wars: Battlefront 2
Star Wars: Jedi Starfighter
Stolen
Stuntman
Syberia
Syphon Filter: Omega St.
T = 20
Terminator 3: Redemption
The Getaway 2 B. Monday

The Godfather
The Sims 2
The Sims: Bustin Out
The Suffering: Ties T. Bind
The Thing
Theme Park World
Tiger Woods Golf 2005
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 06
TOCA Race Driver 3
Tom Clancy's Chaos Theory
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Tomb Raider: Legend
Tony Hawk's: Amer.Waste.
Top Gun: Combat Zones
Total Overdose
True Crime: NYC
TT Superbikes
Twisted-Four: The Game
Twisted Metal Black
U = 21
Ultimate Spider-Man
Urbz: Sims in the City
V = 22
Vietcong: Purple Haze
W = 23
Warriors
World Snooker Champ. '05
WWE Smackdown v Raw'06
WWE Smackdown vs Raw
WWE Smackdown! 5: HCTP
X = 24
X-Files: Resist or Serve
X-Men Legends 2: R.O.A.
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OUTRUN 2006: COAST 2 COAST

STILL LIVING LIFE IN THE FAST LANE AFTER 20 YEARS

● Publisher: Sega ● Developer: SUMO Digital ● Price: £29.99 ● WiFi Multiplayer: Yes ● Downloads: No

It's hard to impress the local girls with a grime-encrusted, clapped-out Fiat Punto. Sure, they'll accept a lift to the local Tesco, but at no point will the girl in the passenger seat throw her arms up in the air and squeal with delight. Thank goodness for videogames then, and for Sega's *OutRun 2006: Coast 2 Coast*. We can swap the Punto for a Ferrari and real girls for more excitable ones who'll whoop at every bend.

As with all the truly great Sega games, *OutRun 2006* ditches realism and ratchets up the fun. The colours are bright and the music is breezily '80s,

Ridge Racer. As well as the timed races, unique challenge stages now add a little spice to the pot.

These challenges are varied with some requiring you to skid between cars, another to avoid colliding with traffic altogether. The best of the bunch, though, is the powerslide challenge, which demands you drift as often and for as long as possible to impress the girl squirming in your bucket seat. As you slide through bend after bend the blonde beauty will squeal and hurl love hearts into the air accompanied by an unrelenting pling, pling, pling musical

peaks, only now everything is bolder, richer and bigger. In keeping with the PS2 version, the roads stretch to the horizon and traffic packs the lanes of every stage. The car models glisten as you spin through yet another sun-soaked highway and huge pyramids lurch from the horizon to draw your gaze away from the cluster of lorries heading your way.

HEY, GOOD LOOKIN'

The only downside to cramming such rich, beautiful visuals on to PSP is that occasionally, and very rarely, there can be too much happening on the screen at any one time. There's often almost too much colour being fired at your eyes. This is a very minor gripe though, in what is surely the most technically impressive racer on PSP to date.

This is by and large what *OutRun 2006* is all about: impressing. Whether you're trying to impress the female passenger, or going head-to-head with a friend over WiFi, or simply letting yourself be sucked in by this visually arresting racer, you will be coming back for more. ■ Ian Dean



As you slide through bend after bend the blonde beauty will squeal and hurl love hearts into the air accompanied by an unrelenting musical note

creating a unique retro update. In keeping with the core gameplay of the original coin-op you simply need to reach the next checkpoint within the time limit. Now, if this were all that was on offer it would be a very shallow experience.

MORE THAN ONE GAME

Luckily, there is more going on in *OutRun 2006* to excite the palms of us PSP gamers used to the likes of *Burnout* and

note. Is it the squealing girly, the desire to impress your peroxide pixelette or the old skool need to earn the highest score that makes this so addictive? Whatever the reason, this game demands to be played.

As with the gameplay, the graphics have also been spruced up. The original game was loved for its colourful, creative backdrops and *OutRun 2006* on PSP is no different. It's all in here – beaches, pyramids and cloud-covered mountain

VERDICT

A racer with the perfect mix of old-fashioned gameplay and stunning visuals, you can't help but be impressed by *OutRun 2006*

9

IN-DEPTH

OUTRUN 2006: COAST 2 COAST

Pros: Tight gameplay and stunning, dazzling visuals

Cons: Some challenges can be very frustrating at times

Graphics: Slick, bold and colourful tracks across a good variety of backdrops

Sound: Classic breezy *OutRun* tunes are remixed

Gameplay: Classic arcade racing perfected on the small screen

Lifespan: Six-player WiFi will keep you racing for a long time

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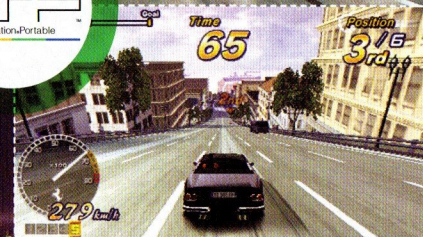
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If you want to get off to a good start, it's best not to create as much wheel spin as this



OutRun 2006 is spectacular and pushes PSP to the max with its stunning backgrounds (below, right)



Compact But Laden With Features

Completing *OutRun 2006* is all about racking up the miles. After every race, points are converted to *OutRun* miles that can be spent in the store on new modes, features and tit-bits.

Hitting the right notes

This new edition of *OutRun* features new and reworked music tracks from all the past *OutRuns*, plus Richard Jacques's remixes. Pictures of the discs' album covers show the CD each track has been lifted from, so you can go and buy it for real, if you desire.

Wax on, wax off

OutRun has Ferrari love at the heart of the action. So, what better way to spend your *OutRun* miles on than a garage full of spanking new cars? Along with the standards, you also get special editions of each car. However, of the 12 cars on offer the new Ferrari Superamerica and old skool Testarossa will get fan's juices pumping.

Games galore

One of the real plus points of *Coast 2 Coast* is the sheer number of game modes and tracks on offer. You can spend your miles unlocking new tracks (mirrored circuits, mostly) but also dabble in different versions of *OutRun*, including the original *Coast 2 Coast* coin-op.



The Easter Island heads have been repositioned alongside a six-lane motorway – if only Sega were head of road management over here (top). Drifting has been perfectly executed (right)



The auto-aim function might annoy the *SOCOM* experts out there, but it does help compensate for the innaccuracy of the PSP's analogue nub and makes online battles even more intense (above)

SOCOM: US NAVY SEALS FIRETEAM BRAVO

And the **Purple Heart for bravely** cramming a PS2 stealth-action legend onto PSP goes to...

● Publisher: Sony ● Developer: Zipper Active ● Price: £34.99 ● WiFi Multiplayer: Yes ● Downloads: No

Goose, Mutley, Scrappy Doo, R2-D2 and now *SOCOM*'s Lonestar; what have they all got in common? Answer: they're wingmen, back-up, brothers-in-arms who've got your ass covered and are prepared to take a bullet to get the job done.

You see, brothers and sisters, doing it for yourself just isn't hip any more. And that's the principle that knits together the two halves of this latest stealth action shooter from Zipper Active as tightly as the field stitches on a bleeding Navy SEAL's gushing wounds.

On the one hand you've got a fairly typical action/adventure game in which you play Sandman, a hard-ass Navy SEAL commander deployed internationally to fight insurgencies that threaten to upset world peace. With fellow gun nut Lonestar at your side you can sneak and blast your way through 14 missions on four continents, planting explosives, whacking baddies and rescuing hostages to your purple heart's content.

A command menu enables you to instruct your sidekick to clear out rooms,

cover your advance and lob grenades – using him wisely will prove crucial to mission success. Oh, and you'd better cover him, because if Lonestar bites the dust your mission is bust and it's time to restart the whole shebang.

The other half of *SOCOM* utilises the WiFi capabilities of your PSP and the natty head-set that comes in the premium box (see 'Check your head-set'). Here you can bark out orders for real as you battle with, and against, human fighters in a dance to the death. And



You have to remain totally focussed. You're forced to rely on your wingman as your nerves begin to jingle when you come round every corner of every corridor

while you're always likely to get some leeway from AI opponents, human rivals will exploit any weaknesses in team play, so victory only comes if you use your colleagues wisely.

Fans of the *SOCOM* series on PS2 will already be familiar with the game's winning combination of stealth and

explosive contacts. And they'll be pleased to learn that the game translates well to PSP. It does take a while to become accustomed to the single analogue control method, which means you can't move your SEAL and your head to scour for enemies at the same time. If you want to check out the environment you have to flick into Free-Look mode, which makes you static and susceptible to enemy snipers.

To counter this, developer Zipper Interactive has designated the left shoulder button as a strafe command and the right shoulder button as a target lock. Some people may find the latter is too great a helping hand and it certainly seems to take the stealth edge out of the game at first. There's a slight sense of tunnel vision caused by this control issue, too, but the upside is that you have to remain totally focused during a mission. You're forced to rely on your wingman as your nerves jingle when you come to every corner of every corridor.

ENEMY INTELLIGENCE

Unfortunately, that sense of tension isn't always maintained, thanks to the rather schizophrenic enemy AI. When you fire off a few shots from range your foes will quickly hit the ground, slithering on their bellies to find a nearby rock as cover



Let's Roll

For your money *SOCOM* on PSP offers 14 new missions across a variety of territories, including urban and rural environments. Here's four of the best...

Chile

This PSP-exclusive location takes in sewers and railway yards as you hunt down rebels determined to overthrow the Chilean president.

Morocco

The dunes of North Africa give way to settlements and palaces as you seek the truth behind a terrorist insurgency.

South Asia

The living jungle and busy rebel camps of South Asia provide the next stamp on your blood-soaked passport.

Poland

The final stop on your tour is stark Eastern Europe to face the twisted minds bent on cacking-up the world.

RECOMMENDED

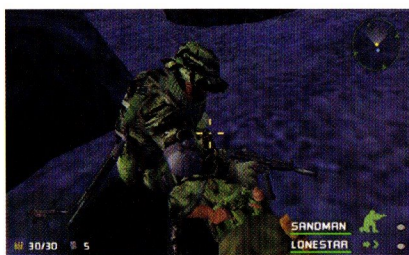


PlayStation Portable



Your mission, should you choose to accept it, varies from the straightforward blowing up of strategic points to more intricate sorties





Your wingman will become your best buddy and it'll be up to the two of you to stop those terrorist cells from wreaking the havoc they're so intent on causing

before returning fire – it's brilliant. However, in close-quarters combat the bad men are often extremely slow to respond, affording you enough time to pause between bursts of fire in order to save bullets. They'll often fail to notice you until you're filling their face with lead from nigh-on point blank range.

And, in one mission where you're secretly following an insurgent agent, your quarry remains blissfully unaware of your presence, despite the noisy chatter of your M8 rifle within feet of him.

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

Such gripes are forgivable, however, as they also give you a tremendous sense of empowerment when you slip around bases drilling enemies with your killing cannon and then picking off distant foes.

You see, while targeting is partially automated, you don't get a precise lock on an enemy. Those more subtly minded can simply use the system to orientate themselves towards targets then slip into zoom mode to silently whack enemies. Despite the fact the occasional stupidity

of a foe will give you a breather, the fact you can't auto-save means you know that one misjudged encounter, one grenade tossed too close to your wingman, will result in death, dishonour and a humbling mission restart.

And while missions are short, you'll kick yourself to be cast ten or 15 minutes away from finding out the next development in a plot of counter-terrorism and infiltration. The narrative, which is pacy and engaging, opens in the PSP-exclusive operational theatre of Chile (or Chi-lay as the Americans seem to call it). Your missions to Morocco, South Asia and Poland are then linked by sumptuous cut-scenes, which would shame many PS2 games. The missions are also very varied. As well as blowing things up (bridges, radios, anti-aircraft installations) you'll indulge in a smattering of intel gathering, hostage rescue/capture and even odd photographic briefs.

With that said, the single-player game is big enough to get your teeth into, but far from epic. *SOCOM* really goes large in multiplayer mode. With 16-players



back-foot. And once you're familiar with the territory online you can join your friends in clans and take on rival groups in Suppression (team Deathmatch) games and Extraction (hostage rescue) missions – the standout forms of multiplayer carnage.

If you're going to make the most of your PSP's online abilities, you'll add a whole new gaming dimension whenever you take this beast online. Alas, like most aspects of this game, the online play is pretty much a slimmed-down version of *SOCOM 3* on PS2. But for all these nips and tucks, *SOCOM* retains its heart and soul and has been chiseled into a lean, mean, PSP fighting machine. ■ Lee Hall



The narrative is pacy and engaging. Your missions to Morocco, South Asia and Poland are linked by sumptuous cut-scenes, which would shame many PS2 games

VERDICT

SOCOM is a shooter with style, brains and plenty of ammo – thanks to brilliant multiplayer and PS2 connectivity options

9

IN-DEPTH

SOCOM: Fireteam Bravo

Pros: Pacy, immersive and brimming with replayability online

Cons: The AI isn't perfect and the auto-aim won't be to everyone's taste

Graphics: Dark, samey backdrops and basic foreground objects disappoint

Sound: Jingoistic victory tunes, authentic speech and atmospheric music

Gameplay: Slick, engaging and tense offline. Tactically rewarding in WiFi mode

Lifespan: A modest single-player mode, but an endless multiplayer game

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battling it out in 12 multiplayer maps the action is at times frantic, especially with the target lock mode making locating enemies quick and firefights a regularly intense occurrence.

Online, the game requires more tactical nous than its PS2 elder brothers, thanks to the target lock facility. You'll only catch an enemy unawares by sneaking up behind them and, with superior targeting accuracy to contend with, you'll need to use cover better than ever before.

The real thrill of multiplayer, however, is in barking instructions at your teammates to ensure all of your fields of fire are covered and that you're in a strong defensive position when you're on the

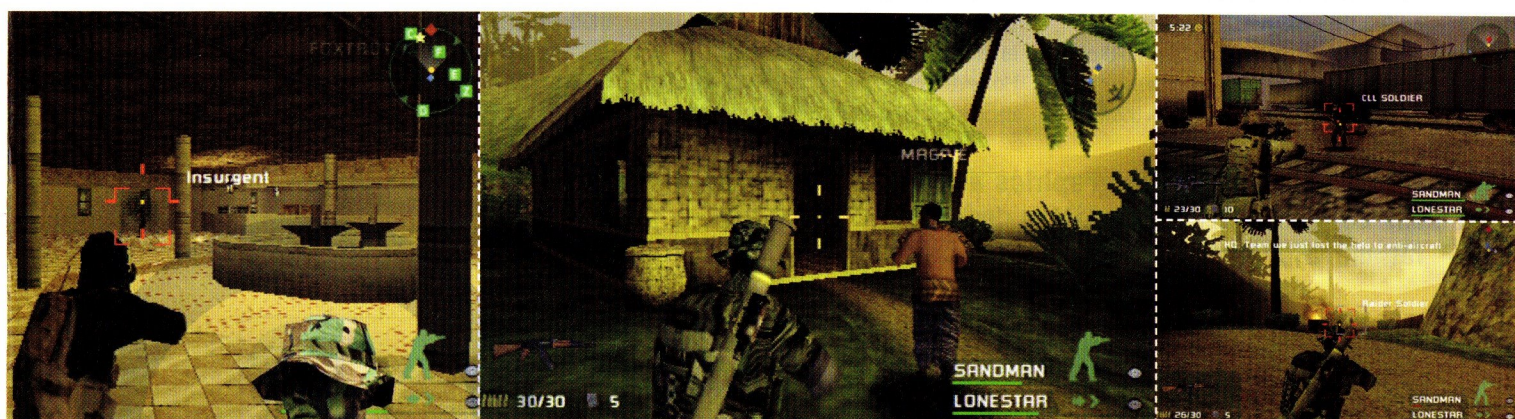


Talking Crosstalk

Nope, it's nothing to do with an angry exchange of words – 'crosstalk' refers to *SOCOM* PSP's ability to link-up with *SOCOM 3* on PS2. If you perform hidden objectives in your PSP version, such as uncover a vital piece of intel, it unlocks extra characters and intelligence in *SOCOM 3*, and vice versa. So an uncovered radio code in *SOCOM 3* might give you the heads up on troop movements in *SOCOM* PSP once you connect your Sony machines via a USB cable. Neat or what?



Uncovering intelligence details in the PSP version leads to advantages in the granddaddy *Socom 3* PS2 game. A rather nifty incentive to keep a watchful eye on all that happens



With operational theatres all over the world you'll end up traversing a number of different environments. Sadly, the locals are not as welcoming as they are for the *Virtua Tennis World Tour* (above)

The enemy AI can vary. Sometimes your gunfire will alert the opposition. At other times, the sound of shooting doesn't wake them from their guard-duty slumber

Check Your Headset

For an extra fiver your *SOCOM* UMD comes with an extra special treat – an official PSP headset. The device is less dainty than your standard earphones but just as stylish with a molded rubber microphone extension. Even with Sony's trademark good design in evidence, it's questionable how cool you'll look balling. "We're going hot! Hot! Hot!" or whooping "Hoo-ya!" while playing *SOCOM* in your local cafe.

UNTOLD LEGENDS: THE WARRIOR'S CODE

SPREAD THE WORD, MORE OF THE SAME...

● Publisher: Ubisoft ● Developer: SOE ● Price: £29.99 ● WiFi Multiplayer: Yes ● Downloads: No

Despite being one of the better selling PSP titles, the original *Untold Legends* was hardly a perfect example of hack 'n' slashery, but it was a game that improved over time.

For the sequel, SOE has given it a bit of an overhaul; character models and graphics are much improved, the combat system is a little deeper, and there are far more objectives contained within the missions themselves.

Boasting comprehensive character customisation, you first determine the look and attributes of your character, before embarking on your trawl through

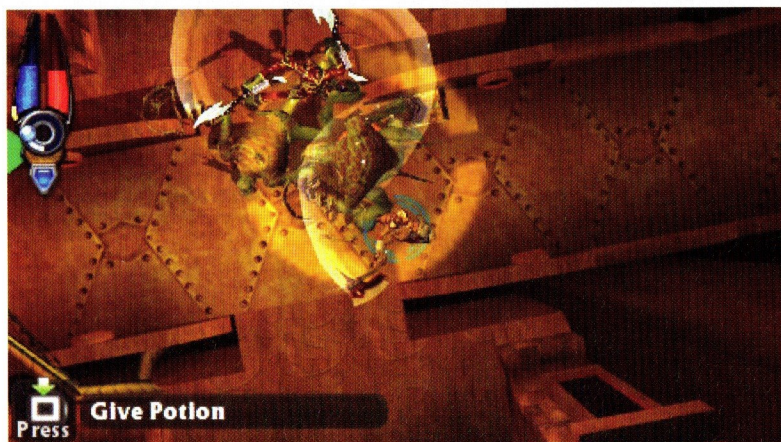
level after level of slash-'em-up fun. Combat equates to hammering the same button over and over while using the remaining buttons to unleash a spell or two (six available) to help destroy your enemies – simple. Graphically, we've seen a lot worse on the PSP, but we can't help but feel the top-down camera angle is a bit of a waste on the new lovely-looking character models.

Despite improvements on the original, the adventure still feels quite stale, offering little to really shout about. However, things get better when you dabble with the multiplayer mode. When

you're spending days hacking through similar-looking murky dungeons, it feels a great deal more adventurous with a buddy at your side, backing you up. Co-op mode enables players to take on the single-player missions, and there are even a few competitive modes (supporting up to four players) in there too, so you can use your weapons on each other when you're tired of working together. How nice!

Similar to the original, you'll need to invest a lot of time in *The Warrior's Code* in order to gain any enjoyment from it, which is an odd requisite for an on-the-go hand-held game. ■ Mike Oldman

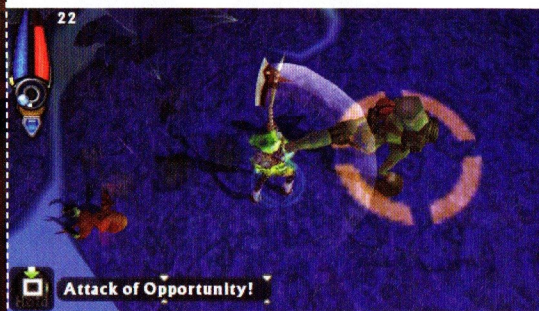
Character models and graphics are much improved, the combat system is a little deeper, and there are far more objectives contained within the missions



VERDICT

The Warrior's Code delivers the sort of button-bashing action fans have come to expect. The problem is, it's ultimately more of the same

6



IN-DEPTH

UNTOLD LEGENDS:
THE WARRIOR'S CODE

Pros: Easy to pick up and play with simple combat

Cons: Playable, but there's nothing original here

Graphics: Better than the original, but still no great shakes

Sound: Very nice with quality voice acting all the way

Gameplay: Simple to pick up, but takes time to master

Lifespan: Multiplayer will keep you coming back for more

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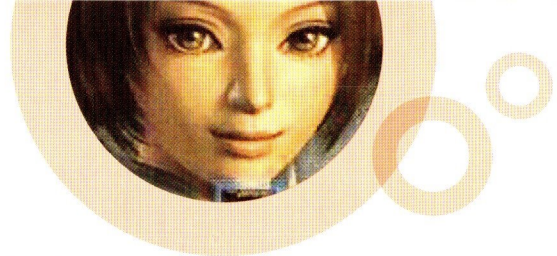
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They've upgraded the combat to be a bit more dynamic, but multiplayer is where the fun is

You Absolute Legend, You

Featuring a wider variety of combat moves and special abilities over the original game, *The Warrior's Code* offers decent value. Once again, the D-pad is used to unleash spells you've been upgrading throughout your adventure. These range from freezing your enemy to setting them on fire, or both. Dynamic attacks of opportunity make way for a little variety, too – pressing the **△** button at a timely moment during battle will unleash a devastating blow to your enemy.



SAMURAI WARRIORS: STATE OF WAR

A SLICE OF OLD-FASHIONED GAMEPLAY

● Publisher: KOEI ● Developer: Omega Force ● Price: £34.99 ● WiFi Multiplayer: Yes ● Downloads: No

This *Samurai Warriors* game is different from the other repetitive slashers in the *Warriors* family because it takes the enjoyable elements from the PS2 versions, throws in some genuinely engaging tactical elements, and then tops it all off with WiFi multiplayer support.

The story mode takes place on a campaign-by-campaign basis, with each one broken down into small parts that

can be tackled whenever you snatch a couple of minutes alone with your PSP. First comes the tactical stage, where you move your army on a map, play special cards, and try to gain territory, like you would in the board game *Risk*. Then you have to fight for the land you've claimed, which is where the all-too-familiar button bashing comes into play. The tactics are an enjoyable, brain-teasing addition to the series – and because the action is sliced into easily digestible minute-or-so-length scraps for a small section of map, it never feels tedious.

The conversion has brought a few bad habits with it though, the most shameful being that enemies will often suddenly pop up to take a dishonourable swipe at you from a location that's hidden by the drab, fog-filled



The classic hack 'n' slash action has been cut into bite-sized chunks of action to make for a less tedious romp than on the PS2

environments. This doesn't cost *State Of War* victory, but it slightly takes the edge off what is an otherwise razor-sharp PSP game. ■

VERDICT

By cutting the chunks of action down to size and adding in some *Risk* style tactics, KOEI has actually improved on its *Warriors* formula

7



BUST-A-MOVE GHOST

BUSTING MAKES US FEEL GOOD

● Publisher: 505 Game Street ● Developer: Taito ● Price: £29.99 ● WiFi Multiplayer: Yes ● Downloads: No

Classic Puzzle, Ghost Puzzle, Blind Puzzle, Seesaw Puzzle, Shot Puzzle, Running Launcher Puzzle – the modes may sound vaguely different, but this is the same 'classic' gaming as it was ten years ago.

Playing *Bust-A-Move* is easy: it's all about emptying 2D screens filled with bubbles. Use your character to shoot coloured spheres out of a crossbow-style machine to form groups of three or more

bubbles, which will then pop. Repeat until the stage is cleared. But despite the subtle differences between the various modes, the gameplay is painfully over-familiar. Solid enough puzzling, certainly, but nothing to trouble the shiny majesty of *Lumines*, the genre's current king. ■

VERDICT

It's classic gaming that has failed to move on with the times. It's still good, but without any innovation it can't compete on PSP – tired

5



Gameplay is undoubtedly over-familiar, but you might still want to join Bob and Bub in popping matching coloured bubbles in this spooky and bizarre environment



WORLD POKER TOUR

THE LATEST PSP CARD SHARK GOES ALL IN FOR THE BIG POT!

● Publisher: 2K Sports ● Developer: Backbone Entertainment ● Price: £34.99 ● WiFi Multiplayer: Yes ● Downloads: No

This and Oxygen's poker game have been eying each other over the beige this month, sizing one another up before going all in for the biggest pot of all, your cash. We've been stuck in the middle and asked to put our pile of chips on the winner.

It's a toughie. On the surface Oxygen's *World Championship Poker 2* (reviewed page 66) has the Howard Lederer licence, but *World Tour Poker* is the real deal. It's

and you'll soon be swapping thousands at the invitation-only events on the way to the big time.

One of the best things about *WPT* though is the AI. A game like this will win or fold on the intelligence of the CPU card-sharks facing off against you, so it's a testament to the game that beginners will be able to learn from it. After a few competitions you'll begin to understand when to bid, fold and push



Be brave and jump into the career mode and WPT really opens up. Win a match or two and you'll soon be swapping thousands at the invitation-only events

got the glossy licence, the *WWE*-style presentation (complete with bikini clad interviewers) and when it comes to the tables, this poker sim has the shifty AI that will nab your cash in seconds.

You'll always naturally begin a game like this by dropping into the quick modes, playing rounds of Texas Hold'em and trying to learn the ropes. However, be brave and jump into the career mode and *WPT* really opens up. You can create a player, if you wish, and then begin on the bottom rung playing poker at the local community centre for dimes. Win a match or two

the players for an all-in bluff.

WPT also beats its rival hands-down by virtue of being the most popular poker sim currently flying off the shelves in the US. This means that when you go online to take on real gamblers there will be plenty of frustrated, Vegas wannabes to test yourself against. Oxygen played the Lederer card and it just wasn't enough to take the pot from *World Poker Tour*. ■

VERDICT

Winning virtual money from fake people shouldn't be this much fun but *WPT* is horribly addictive. One game and you'll be hooked

7

IN-DEPTH

WORLD POKER TOUR

Pros: The AI opponents are actually tough to bluff and beat

Cons: It can be hard to get off the blocks and start winning big

Graphics: Not the best looking in the pack but does the job

Sound: Some rampant *WWE* style commentary and intro music

Gameplay: Slick and addictive poker gaming, just like the real thing

Lifespan: Poker is perfect to dip in and out of on the train

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Though the names are jokes in the early rounds (Andy Tower) these players' card skills aren't, be prepared for epic card battles



Once you progress out of the early rounds dealing for dimes, you will be able to enter some of the invitation-only events and play with the real life stars of the World Poker Tour, such as Antonio Esfandiari

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FIELD COMMANDER

FINALLY, STRATEGY FANS GET THE CHANCE TO **USE THEIR HEADS** IN THE PSP'S FIRST ONLINE WAR SIM

● Publisher: Ubisoft ● Developer: SOE ● Price: £29.99 ● WiFi Multiplayer: Yes ● Downloads: Yes

With racers, footy games and wrestling sims flexing muscle on PSP we've been lacking a more cerebral challenge. Thankfully, Ubisoft has spied the gap in the market and launched its assault with the diminutive, but powerful, *Field*

adding much more of a strategic feel to the proceedings as you rotate the battlefield to get a better view of the impending situation.

There's plenty of modes of play tucked away in here, too – giving you the option to play through the single-player

There's plenty of modes, giving you the option to play through the single-player campaign, enjoy an instant quick battle, or go head-to-head with a friend

Commander. In this game you work for the Global Defence League, an organisation that protects the world against villains whose goals range from terrorism to global domination.

With gameplay similar to that of *Advance Wars* on Nintendo's Gameboy, players take turns to issue commands to the various units making up your team. Everything from land, sky and sea units are available and equipped to do serious damage to anyone threatening world peace. *Field Commander* features 30 separate missions, and despite not varying as much as we'd have liked, the basic mechanic of the game is solid enough to create a different feel for each battle. Aesthetically, *Field Commander* is realised in full 3D. This is a nice touch,

campaign, enjoy an instant quick battle, go head-to-head with a friend and pit yourself against others online. A great little extra is the create-a-mission mode, where you can modify an existing map or start from scratch, and when done, upload your warzone to a central server for anyone to enjoy. It's here where the game will really take a hold – as currently there is no other game that offers this scope for strategic online battling. Whilst the single-player game lacks variety, online *Field Commander* will have you hooked. ■ Mike Oldman

VERDICT

Whilst not the best example of the genre, *Field Commander* is clearly trying to impress, and there's nothing out there to challenge it

7

IN-DEPTH

FIELD COMMANDER

Pros: This is the only game of its kind available for the PSP

Cons: A bit slow and ponderous, and therefore not for everyone

Graphics: Simple and clean battlezones are competently created in 3D

Sound: All the rat-a-tat-boom you'll ever need

Gameplay: Simple to play but can become repetitive

Lifespan: Multiplayer and create-a-map modes should keep you coming back

8

7

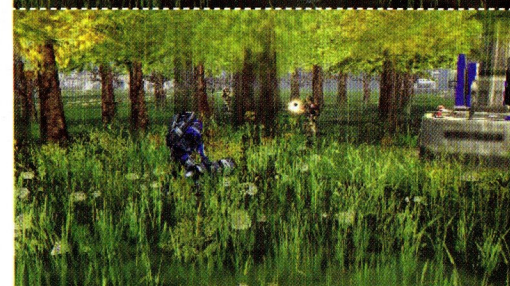
6

7



Know Your Units...

Avoiding realism, *Field Commander* instead opts for a slightly more 'cartoony' style with regards to your units... but don't think they're not just as deadly as the real thing. Everything from tanks, attack boats, planes, helicopters, cruisers and anti-aircraft vehicles are ready, waiting, and at your disposal. As with all good real-time strategy sims you will need to master your units to defeat the enemy. In total there are 15 divisions at your disposal, so there's plenty to learn in here. Though it's on a hand-held SOE certainly hasn't scripted on the detail.



The environments look ace on PSP, with terrain detailed with foliage and weather conditions. The carnage that your units create becomes a dazzling pyrotechnics display that jumps off the screen

POPOLOCROIS

A **COMPLEX NAME** FOR WHAT IS
A VERY SIMPLE GAME

● Publisher: Ignition ● Developer: G-Artists ● Price: £34.99 ● WiFi Multiplayer: No ● Downloads: No

The PSP is fast becoming a haven for retro lovers everywhere and 2D RPGs are quickly emerging as quite a fix. One of the biggest such series inside Japan has been *PoPoLoCrois*, which is now joining the likes of *Tales Of Eternia* and *Breath Of Fire III* as it scurries onto PSP.

What makes *PoPoLoCrois* PSP different from other retro RPGs is it's a compilation of two classic RPGs, which to

adventure that pits your band of warriors against angry pandas, furious pepper pots (Mr Pepper) and smug gnomes.

Its style and story makes it very accessible, too. This magical adventure of Prince Pietro and his kingdom will have you hooked instantly. You'll come around after hammering yet more smarmy looking wolves to discover five hours have passed you by unnoticed.



Visually, this game is a 30-hour charm offensive of fairytale magic and pixy dust. Every character has been lovingly 'cutified'

date have only been available on PSone inside Japan, and a new third adventure joining the plots together.

While showing its age in places *PoPoLoCrois* is a hard game to put down. Why? Well, visually this game is a 30-hour charm offensive of fairytale magic and pixy dust. Every character has been lovingly designed, animated and 'cutified'. In this day and age of gang games and car pimping it's hard not to enjoy an

However, what is so pleasurable about *PoPoLoCrois* is also what is so lacking. There really isn't too much of a challenge in here and the game has nothing new to offer the genre. The combat is simple turn-based stat crunching and the journey to the story's end lacks any thought process. That five hours you put in may well be your last if you turn off the PSP - there really isn't much of an incentive to head back.



But this won't deter fans of the RPG genre that will fall in love with the retro style and the back-to-basics simple gameplay, sauntering on merrily to the game's final anime cut-scene. In this context *PoPoLoCrois* isn't bad, it's just lacking any *real* magic. ■ Ian Dean

VERDICT

Very simple, old fashioned and quite dull, but very charming. Once you've played for a while, you're unlikely to return

6



The visual style is very detailed and colourful, much like every other retro 2D RPG



If you stick with the game then some cool characters appear later on, such as this freaky mini-demon



IN-DEPTH POPOLOCROIS

Pros: A fantastically cute visual style and retro feel

Cons: Too simple and mundane to appeal outside the fanbase

Graphics: The anime style is sprinkled with colourful fairy dust

Sound: The tinkling music can get very irritating, very quickly

Gameplay: Basic combat and a linear story dampen the excitement

Lifespan: You'll finish it soon enough, it's too easy

7

5

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5

FOOTBALL MANAGER HANDHELD

ALL THOSE FANS? THEIR HOPES AND DREAMS
NOW REST IN YOUR HANDS

● Publisher: Sega ● Developer: Sports Interactive ● Price: £29.99 ● WiFi Multiplayer: No ● Downloads: No

For the PSP, *Football Manager* has been cut down to size as brutally as the recipient of a Michael Essien tackle. You can't magic up custom formations, for example – you have to stick with the presets. The database and the number of leagues have been severely trimmed (although never enough

a marvellous return to the instant gratification what early *Champ Man* offered up. It's not a game for everyone, that's for sure, but if you've got the management bug approaching the World Cup, you might find yourself opting to play this version over its bigger brother. And that is praise indeed. ■ Alex Dale



The database and the number of leagues have been severely trimmed (although never enough that you won't be able to find that player you're looking for)

that you won't be able to find that player you're looking for) and that 2D match engine? Gone. Shown the door. Out of there. Replaced with a text-based engine reminiscent of *Championship Manager*, circa 1998. But, it really doesn't matter.

Football Manager Handheld shows breathtaking awareness of what fans of the series want from a hand-held incarnation. They've got the important thing right – the match engine – and given us just enough of every other aspect that we don't even notice what's missing. Those expecting as deep an experience as the PC version will be disappointed – although when you're on a 20-minute bus journey to work, you're likely to want a less involving game.

Indeed, the season goes by at such a pace, that for those of us who think the series has become rather too bloated over the past few years, this represents

VERDICT

This is a supremely addictive management sim that is an acquired taste, but one that leaves a pleasant sensation in your mouth

8

Name	On	Rt	GI	Name	On	Rt	GI
P. Kenny (c)	84	7	-	K. Pilkington	96	7	-
D. Unsworth	89	7	-	R. Ullathorne	86	5	-
D. Geary	89	7	-	D. Pipe	89	6	-
C. Short	90	7	-	M. Edwards	90	6	-
P. Jagielka	90	7	-	J. Baudet	91	6	-
J. Forte	85	6	-	D. Martin	84	6	-
P. Hill	87	8	1	R. Zadkovich	87	6	-
G. Pilkroft	87	7	-	N. Sissoko (c)	89	6	-
A. Quinn	86	6	-	L. McMahon	86	7	-
D. Webber	87	6	-	P. Sneath	86	6	-
A. Adinbiyi	89	7	-	A. White	85	6	-

Pos	Name
GK	Pilkington, K
DL	Ullathorne, R
DR	Pipe, D
DC	Edwards, M
DC	Baudet, J
ML	Martin, D
MR	Zadkovich, R
MC	Sissoko, N
MC	McMahon, L
FC	Sneath, P
FC	White, A

Contract Requirements	Contract Offer
Wage	£450
Contract Length	1 year
Signing On Fee	£0
Goal Bonus	£0
Assist Bonus	£40
Big Club Release Clause	No
Manager Job Release Clause	No

Headline	Date
Leicester appoint Cotterill as manager	21 Jul AM
Williams out for a few days	21 Jul AM
Cheltenham seal Payne deal	21 Jul AM
Cheltenham transfer bid for Payne	19 Jul AM

A lot has been culled from the PC version, but you'll be glad to know that the player base seems unaffected (above, left). The spreadsheet-style graphics are bland but suitably informative (above, right)

IN-DEPTH

Football Manager Handheld

Pros: Superb understanding of how to streamline a complex PC game

Cons: Sometimes the lack of options can leave you feeling claustrophobic

Graphics: Big, bright and readable, but as impressive as a dead pigeon

Sound: There is absolutely nothing to write home about here

Gameplay: Immensely addictive, despite being little more than a spreadsheet

Lifespan: Could, hypothetically, outlive your PSP

5

1

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Overview	Match Stats	Action Zones	Home Stats	Away Stats	Player Ratings	Speed: Very Fast
16%	13%	30%	19%	11%	11%	

The 2D match engine has been replaced with this spreadsheet, but a goal against someone two leagues above is just as exciting!

WORMS OPEN WARFARE

THINGS NOT TO SAY ON A TRAIN, #1: "PSSST – I'VE GOT WORMS." THE 2D WORLD OF WORM WARFARE IS BACK, TIME TO GET THOSE WRIGGLY CRITTERS TOOLED UP

● Publisher: THQ ● Developer: Team 17 ● Price: £34.99 ● WiFi Multiplayer: Yes ● Downloads: No

All right, get it out of your system now: 'My worm's on the move!' Hoo! 'Leave my worm alone!' Pffrrp! And, of course, the all-time classic: 'My worm's harder than yours!' Tee-hee! Yes, *Worms* has been a chucklebox of annelid-based double entendres since it debuted on the Amiga nearly a decade ago, but now you can take your puerile sense of humour on the bus with you. God bless new technology.

For first-time worm-handlers, the premise is simple: two or more gangs of militaristic worms, equipped with weapons of

varying degrees of destruction, face off across a 2D environment, and take turns to fire potshots at each other. If they run out of energy, they die. If they get knocked off the screen or into water, they die. The last worm remaining erect (oh, grow up) is the winner.

With mates, then, this is absolute genius. It's a game of careful calculation and steely nerves, where you're constantly on the verge of sweet

success (a looping shot into the wind lets you hit a rival from around a corner) or humiliating failure (you miss a chum and plop anti-climactically into the drink). A wealth of well-crafted options offers endless possibilities, from gentlemanly duels (fire punches, shotguns and Uzis, all other weapons) through bitter wars of

With mates, this is absolute genius. It's a game of careful calculation and steely nerves, where you're constantly on the verge of sweet success

attrition (girdler 'n' drilling extravaganzas) to all-out carnage (unlimited dynamite and exploding sheep).

The flip side, of course, is that even with a challenge mode, it isn't nearly as fun on your own. *Worms* is all about angles, so you're always painfully aware that the computer's worms are missing you on purpose or targeting you with laser precision. Of course, this has always been the case and with the PSP's WiFi capabilities, you can go a long way to negate this problem, but only if you don't mind asking complete strangers to play with your worms. ■ Joel Snape

VERDICT

As enjoyable a PSP multiplayer experience as you'll find, but a bit soulless for repeated solo play. Get it if you've got PSP-playing mates

7

IN-DEPTH

WORMS OPEN WARFARE

Pros: Manic, explosive sheep-flinging fun

Cons: The AI can't quite mimic the proper two-player experience

Graphics: Just as good as the PS2, with helpful zoom controls

Sound: Squeaky and a touch on the irritating side

Gameplay: Endless tactical combinations to try

Lifespan: With friends, you'll have plenty of larks

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The graphics compare very favourably to the PS2 version



Exploding sheep and dynamite: two very effective weapons



The solo-player experience doesn't quite measure up. But destroying your friend's worms is fantastic fun

The Worm Turns

If you're prepared to risk a dropped PSP, one of the best ways to play *Open Warfare* is on a single machine, passing it around for everyone to take their turn and huddling together to watch as friends make their move. The only peril is the clock – shifty players will try to hog the PSP after their go, depriving you of precious aiming time. It's a novel way to run the Gameshare feature and even makes the whole slug-fest feel more retro. The last time you huddled around a console like this probably was to play the original *Worms*. However, four players around one PSP is asking for a dropped console. We'd suggest playing *Worms* above a soft surface like carpet or grass.

NBA BALLERS: REBOUND

SQUEEZE SHAQ INTO **YOUR POCKET** AND STILL HAVE ROOM FOR CHANGE...

● Publisher: Midway ● Developer: Backbone ● Price: £29.99 ● WiFi Multiplayer: Yes ● Downloads: No

The PSP may boast a screen the size of a small guinea pig, but that doesn't mean that when it comes to sports titles, it doesn't suffer as much as any other hand-held.

Take the football titles as an example – while the graphics were slick, it is a near impossibility to make out what exactly is going on at times. It's reasons like this that simplified, arcade games such as *FIFA Street 2* are the better bet – the immediacy of the gameplay and larger players lend themselves far better for gaming on the move. It's for this very reason that basketball games should be

modes left it feeling a bit repetitive and empty. But the good news is, *NBA Ballers: Rebound* scores where its rival hits the rim, and the reason, incredibly, is because it dumbs things down even more.

NBA Ballers is a simple game, the basketball equivalent of headers and volleys. It takes place on a half-court, usually in a suitably 'bling' location, and although the rules change every now and then, principally it's a one-on-one contest, with the game ending when one of the lanky players scores 11 points.

If that sounds a bit samey, then in truth you're not too far off the mark.

your friends too, which is a must for a game based on ball skill bravado. And for all the game's promiscuous perks – the licensed players, the stunning character models and short loading times – one of the main draws is hidden away quite inoffensively. The one-on-one-on-one mode, while chaotic, really adds a new dimension to the game, with moments of strategic ball watching and collusion between chasing players not uncommon.

All of this is pretty much business as usual for Midway's bling-heavy basketball franchise, however, on PSP we do get a couple of exclusive modes that suit the hand-held perfectly. Dunkfest and King Of Thieves are decent on-the-go modes that can be played in short bursts and like much in this game will be mastered immediately. Again, these are best played with a friend over WiFi and can become very competitive.

NBA Ballers: Rebound is a multiplayer gem, then, and one that's quite alright in small doses in career mode but for long-haul travel, make sure you pack another game in your bag. ■ Alex Dale



It takes place on a half-court, usually in a suitably 'bling' location, and although the rules change every now and then, principally it's a one-on-one contest

the perfect sports games for the PSP, with small teams and small courts.

Now, streamlined arcade basketball has a history – the two-on-two SNES classic *NBA Jam* was the first truly fun hoops game, and the *NBA Street* series was extremely well received on the home consoles. Which was why its sister title, *NBA Street Showdown*, was such a disappointment on the PSP. The dumbed-down controls and the removal of several

You'll get the most from *NBA Ballers* if you only play it in small fits and spurts, because although it has a big chain of unlockables to drive you on, the Rags to Riches career mode can be a drag.

Where it comes into its own is as a multiplayer event. The controls are simple enough for a novice to pick them up, and are tricky enough to demand a familiarity with the game to perfect. They always throw up new ways to humiliate

VERDICT

Midway's baller has the game modes *NBA Street* lacked, but it's only worth buying if you're planning to go WiFi and trounce your friends

7

IN-DEPTH

NBA BALLERS: REBOUND

Pros: Loads of game modes and plenty of extras to keep you motivated

Cons: Can prove samey, and is ultimately quite limited

Graphics: Lots of variety, easy to pick up and start playing

Sound: Functional rather than an exemplary display of baller sounds

Gameplay: Simple but very playable edition of the *Ballers* franchise

Lifespan: Unlocking all the players will take some time

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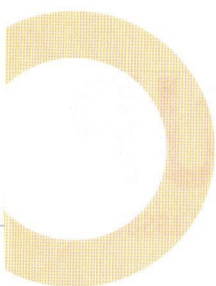
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How PSP sports games work best: with a few characters to leave the screen uncluttered and a small playing area. *Ballers* is one-on-one and has even cut the court in half. Perfect

One-on-one gameplay is perfect for humiliating your mates with *Ballers'* large variety of tricks



Ways To Play

Shaq Attack

Fully-licensed players add a real authenticity to the bling-bling nonsense of the gameplay. It also offers another chance to see time and again just how big Shaq really is. Freakishly big. A lummocks, if you will.

Humiliate friends

The simple nature of the controls mean the basic tricks can be learnt overnight. So humiliating your opponents over WiFi, by nutmegging them before bouncing the ball off their head and into the basket will soon become second nature.

Rags to Riches

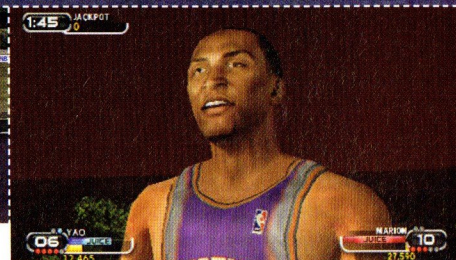
The career mode offers a unique and tasteless way to play basketball. You can create a kankier version of yourself and lead him to international fame and fortune by playing in people's back-lots. The goal is to have more girls and mansions than anyone else. It's not a completely shallow pursuit... honest.

Mansions and girls?

Oh yes, this isn't your EA 'make me an NBA star' game, this is real. The purpose behind playing ball is to amass a pile of houses and cars that wouldn't look out of place on *MTV Cribs*. Raise the stakes so high the bling hurts your eyes.



Combining trick moves and shots can result in some impressive slams (left). However, your CPU rival will always have something a little better up his sleeve... or under his leg (right).



REVIEWS ROUND-UP

THIS IS YOUR ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO **EVERY PSP GAME WORTH KNOWING ABOUT**. EACH ISSUE WE'LL UPDATE THIS REVIEWS LIST SO YOU'LL NEVER BE WITHOUT A BUYER'S GUIDE



A

APE ACADEMY

Monkey madness crammed with puzzles and mini-games.
Reviewed OPS2#63

7

ATV OFFROAD FURY: BLAZIN' TRAILS

Hard to control and frustrating quad bike action.
Reviewed OPS2#63

5

B

BREATH OF FIRE III

Another archaic but entertaining old skool RPG comes to PSP, good but very unoriginal.
Reviewed OPS#3

6

RECOMMENDED!

BURNOUT LEGENDS

A beautiful and thrilling compilation of *Burnout*'s best moments, poor load times hamper the experience though.
Reviewed OPS#3

8

C

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER

Simplified for hand-held use, many of the modern *Champ Manager*'s faults are forgiven. But we now have *Football Manager*.
Reviewed OPS#3

6

CODÉD ARMS

Bland shooter set inside a corrupted military computer.
Reviewed OPS2#64

5

COLIN MCRAE RALLY 2005 PLUS

Offroad racing spoiled by



BURNOUT LEGENDS: EA's 150mph masterpiece is the perfect racer to show off the PSP's awesome visuals

cluttered, hard-to-follow tracks.
Reviewed OPS2#63

6

CRASH TAG TEAM RACING

Funky platformer with okay racing tacked onto it.
Reviewed OPS2#67

7

D

DARKSTALKERS CHRONICLES

Eccentric 2D fighter let down by poor controls.
Reviewed OPS2#63

6

DEAD TO RIGHTS: RECKONING

Generic and mediocre shooter with wonky lock-on system.
Reviewed OPS2#67

6

DEATH JR

Standard slash 'n' bash game with lavish Tim Burton inspired cut-scenes.
Reviewed OPS2#67

5

DYNASTY WARRIORS

Quick and accessible, medieval Japan set hack-slashery.
Reviewed OPS2#63

7

E

EVERYBODY'S GOLF

Super simple, horribly addictive cartoon golf.
Reviewed OPS2#63

8

EXIT

Iffy controls let down what is a genuinely stylish and innovative puzzle game. Well worth a look.
Reviewed OPS#3

7

F

FIFA STREET 2

Arcade football freed from the restrictions of the real thing. If you ignore the urban overtones it's good fun.
Reviewed OPS#3

7

FIFA 06

A shabby version of the PS2 version, though EA has managed to crowbar every stat, game mode and tournament in here.
Reviewed OPS#3

6

FIRED UP

Vehicle-based shooter with a hit and miss online game modes.
Reviewed OPS2#63

7

FORMULA ONE

A decent racer that just can't keep up with the competition.
Reviewed OPS2#63

6

FRANTIX: A PUZZLE ADVENTURE

Challenging puzzler which sadly lacks any long term appeal.
Reviewed OPS2#67

6

G

GHOST IN THE SHELL: STAND ALONE COMPLEX

Average shooter hampered by unsuitable controls and lack of design flair.
Reviewed OPS2#67

5

GO! SUDOKU

Just like your *Sudoku* puzzle book, only ten times as expensive.
Reviewed OPS#3

6

RECOMMENDED!

GRAND THEFT AUTO: LIBERTY CITY STORIES

A brilliant extension to the series and a game all future PSP releases will be judged by. If you love *GTA*, or simply want to see just what the PSP is capable of, then Rockstar's not-so-mini adventure is the game to beat.
Reviewed OPS#3

9

GRIPSHIFT

Enjoyable part-racer, part-puzzler with excellent mini-games.
Reviewed OPS2#67

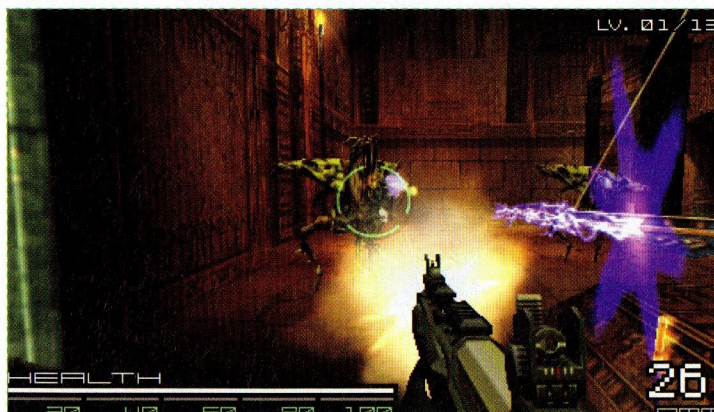
7

H

HARRY POTTER AND THE GOBLET OF FIRE

An unremarkable movie tie-in to delight fans.
Reviewed OPS#3

7



CODÉD ARMS: Konami's sci-fi FPS does a good job of presenting the genre on hand-held



LEMMINGS: The classic puzzler proves equally addictive on PSP



No games yet.



No games yet.



KAO CHALLENGERS

Playable but formulaic platformer that lacks lasting appeal. Reviewed OPS2#67

6

KEY OF HEAVEN

With a poor game camera, tiresome cut-scenes and limited gameplay, this is an action RPG that fails to deliver. Reviewed OPS2#3

5

KOLOOMN

Tricky new control system aside, this proves to be a complex puzzler. Reviewed OPS2#71

8



LEMMINGS

A perfect match of technology and gameplay brings *Lemmings* to the

modern hand-held. A great update of a classic puzzler. Reviewed OPS2#3

8

LUMINES (SILVER)

Dangerously hypnotic mix of music and block puzzles. Reviewed OPS2#63

9

MADDEN NFL 06

Disappointingly bland round of American footy action. Reviewed OPS2#67

5

MARVEL NEMESIS: RISE OF THE IMPERFECTS

Total wreck that mixes messy design with unenjoyable fighting. Reviewed OPS2#67

6

MEDIEVIL: RESURRECTION

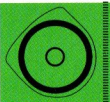
The classic platformer returns but time has been kind to Sony's traditional adventure formula. Reviewed OPS2#63

7

MEGA MAN MAVERICK HUNTER X

So old skool it never graduated. This is limited frustrating and basic. Reviewed OPS2#3

4



Best Of Breed

The top five games by genre

RACING

RIDGE RACER

9/10

SHOOT'-EM-UP

STAR WARS: BATTLEFRONT II

8/10

BEAT'-EM-UP

STREET FIGHTER ALPHA 3 MAX

8/10

ADVENTURE

GTA: LIBERTY CITY STORIES

9/10

RPG

TALES OF ETERNIA

7/10

SPORTS

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 5

8/10

PUZZLE

LUMINES

9/10

STRATEGY

METAL GEAR SOLID AC!D

8/10

MERCURY

Liquid puzzle game. Split, mix and move blobs through mazes. Reviewed OPS2#63

8

RECOMMENDED!

METAL GEAR SOLID AC!D

A hugely enjoyable card battle game that combines the best of Kojima's universe with hardcore Japanese stat crunching. One for die hard fans. Reviewed OPS2#3

8



MIDNIGHT CLUB 3

Expansive street racing, ported straight from PS2. Reviewed OPS2#63

7

MIDWAY ARCADE TREASURES: EXTENDED PLAY

21 old games of which only

only *Joust* and *Gauntlet* are any good. Reviewed OPS2#67

5

NAMCO MUSEUM BATTLE COLLECTION

Compendium of 20 oldies that should have been left gathering dust. Reviewed OPS2#66

2

NBA LIVE 06

Super-strong b-ball game packed with addictive challenges and modes. Reviewed OPS2#67

6

NBA STREET SHOWDOWN

Hip-hop filled, stunt-heavy basketball that's a bit lifeless. Reviewed OPS2#63

6

NEED FOR SPEED: MOST WANTED

A thrill-less take on the racing genre that is laps behind the classier *Burnout Legends*. Reviewed OPS2#3

6

NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND RIVALS

Seen it all before, mod-tastic street racer. Reviewed OPS2#63

6

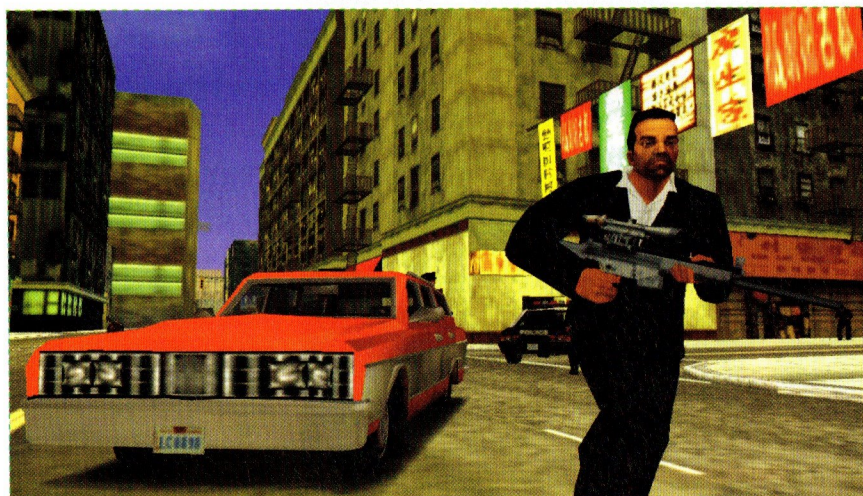
NFL STREET 2 UNLEASHED

An accessible American footy game best played in small doses. Reviewed OPS2#63

7



No games yet.



GTA: LIBERTY CITY STORIES: The game that sold a million PSPs. Keep an eye out for the sequel coming very soon



P

PETER JACKSON'S KING KONG

Too dark, too short and too limited for what was touted as a milestone in licensed tie-ins. Reviewed OPSP#3

5

PRINCE OF PERSIA: REVELATIONS

Littered with intrusive faults, you'll wonder how Ubisoft could have released this botched adventure. Reviewed OPSP#3

6

PURSUIT FORCE

A unique take on the driving genre that places too much emphasis on its car jumping gimmick. Reviewed OPSP#3

8

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 5

A stripped down version of the stunning *Pro Evo 5* that's not quite up to scratch. Poor controls and an irritating camera chip away at the reputation. Reviewed OPSP#3

8

Q

No games yet.

R

RIDGE RACER

This perfectly proportioned arcade racer is an utterly essential purchase for any discerning PSP owner. Buy it now you fools! Reviewed OPS2#63

9



PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 5: It's cut-down and not quite as special as the PS2 version, but still essential

S

SMART BOMB

Disappointing to look at and thoroughly dull to play. Rubbish, basically. Reviewed OPS2#63

3

SPIDER-MAN 2

A lightweight and repetitive adventure lets down what is a technically capable game. Even if you love Spidey this poor conversion will have you crawling the walls in frustration. Reviewed OPSP#3

6

SSX ON TOUR

A great-looking, fast snowboarding sim packed with all the EA polish you could ask for. *SSX On Tour* is one of the best hand-held sports games yet. Reviewed OPSP#3

8

STAR WARS: BATTLEFRONT II

Marches onto PSP without losing its keen strategic edge or blister-happy action. Reviewed OPS2#67

8

RECOMMENDED!

STREET FIGHTER ALPHA 3 MAX

There's no better beat-'em-up series than *Street Fighter* and this hand-held version should be up there with the rest of the games in the series. However, tragedy strikes. Marred by the PSP's duff D-pad, it still manages to pull the punches, though die hard brawlers will be disappointed. Slick graphics, dozens of play modes and a great WiFi mode prove addictive. Reviewed OPSP#3

8

T

TALES OF ETERNIA

An old-fashioned and lengthy RPG is simplistic enough to play between train stations. Reviewed OPSP#3

7

THE SIMS 2

The little people's hand-held debut works brilliantly. There aren't too many portable games that offer this much depth and gameplay. Reviewed OPS2#68

8

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 06

A little dry but *Tiger* on PSP is as playable as the PS2 version. Perhaps Reviewed OPSP#3

7

TOCA RACE DRIVER 2

Authentic dirt racer with an intriguing, plot-led story mode. Reviewed OPS2#63

8

TOKOBOT

A quirky take on the platform genre produces an addictive and fun game, if a little limited. We await a sequel. Reviewed OPSP#3

6

TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND 2 REMIX

Time consuming, one-more-go skateboarding action. Reviewed OPS2#63

8

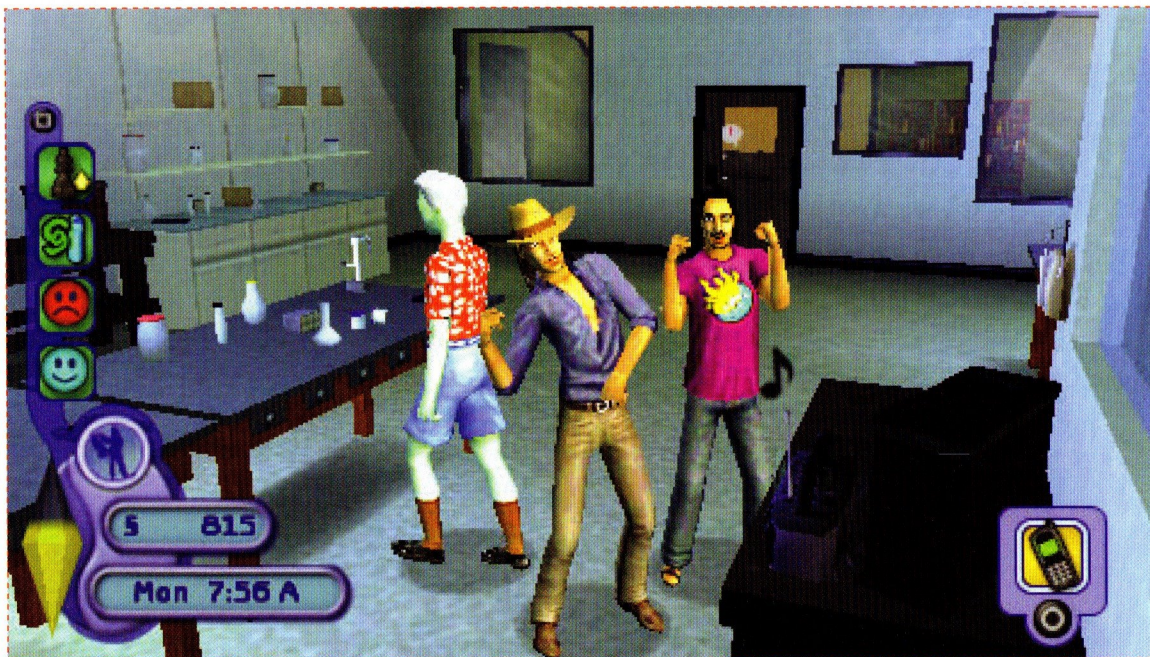
TWISTED METAL: HEAD ON

Anarchic but unforgiving motoring shooter. Reviewed OPS2#65

5



STREET FIGHTER ALPHA 3 MAX: Stunning visuals, a mammoth amount of game modes and that classic SF gameplay. A must buy



THE SIMS 2: Take your virtual life on the road with this excellent hand-held version of the classic life sim. Can you live without it?

U

UNTOLD LEGENDS: BROTHERHOOD OF THE BLADE

A monotonous, uninspiring role-playing adventure in the classic Baldur's Gate mould.

Reviewed OPS2#64

6

V

RECOMMENDED! VIRTUA TENNIS: WORLD TOUR

Sega's tennis sim has always been the daddy on the world circuit and this PSP version is no different. In fact, the dip-in-and-out hand-held gaming environment suits the arcade nature of the gameplay down to the ground. Whether WiFied up or playing solo, Sega's Virtua Tennis is very, very enjoyable.

Reviewed OPSP#3

8

W

WIPEOUT PURE

Retina searingly fast space racer with loads of secrets to unlock and some of the sweetest graphics on PSP. This is only let down by the iffy PSP controls that can feel too loose and a little uncomfortable after extended play.

Reviewed OPS2#63

8

WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

An awkward racer with an impressive array of vehicles. It's just not much fun.

Reviewed OPS2#65

6

WORLD SERIES OF POKER

Trying to cash in on the current poker trend, without offering the psychological thrills of taking a rival's money.

Reviewed OPS2#71

5

WORLD SNOOKER CHALLENGE 2005

Blade's snooker game makes perfect use of the analogue 'nub' to deliver a surprisingly good version of the classic pub sport in the palm of your hand.

Reviewed OPSP#3

7

WORLD TOUR SOCCER: CHALLENGE EDITION

Likeable enough footy game only marred by awkward controls.

Reviewed OPS2#63

7

RECOMMENDED!

WWE SMACKDOWN! VS RAW 2006

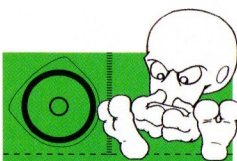
Marred by long load times, this could have been a hand-held classic. By playing on the hoof and then connecting to PS2 via USB you can continuously play in season mode. Plus, PSP exclusive characters and items have been included in this portable edition, delighting grapple fans everywhere. Still, one of the PSP's best.

Reviewed OPSP#3

8



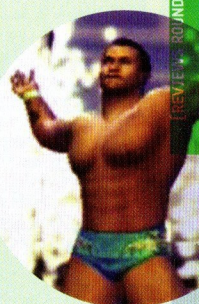
WWE SMACKDOWN! VS RAW 2006: Connect PSP to PS2 in order to keep up to speed with your grappling career!



We Can't Stop Playing WORLD TOUR POKER 2K6

We're not big gamblers or known for dressing in tacky dragon-embazoned Hawaiian shirts, but this month 2K Games' WTP has been stuck in our PSPs. Maybe it's the sedate, relaxed pace or the ability to get one over on the little AI people betting the house on 'two aces in the hole' but this game is frustratingly addictive.

Check out the full review on page 94



[PSP PLUS]

Your guide to getting more from your PSP



[WHAT IS WiFi?]

The lowdown on life without wires

Q How does WiFi work with PSP?

A: WiFi signals operate in the 2.4 and 5GHz radio bands which are also used by many mobile phones. The radio signal connects WiFi-enabled devices to the wireless network at broadband speeds. The network operates through base stations called access points (or Hotspots), which connect to high speed lines back into the Internet. Many newer electronic devices such as the PSP come equipped with WiFi antennas and software. As a result, selecting the WiFi setting on the PSP enables you to connect to the network immediately. It also displays all the available WiFi signals in your location.

Q What are the benefits of WiFi?

A: Wireless access to a high-speed Internet service provides users with freedom and flexibility. In the case of the PSP, it enables multiplayer gaming without the need for peripherals such as link cables and multitaps. In fact, your opponents don't even have to be in the same room as you.

Q How fast is WiFi?

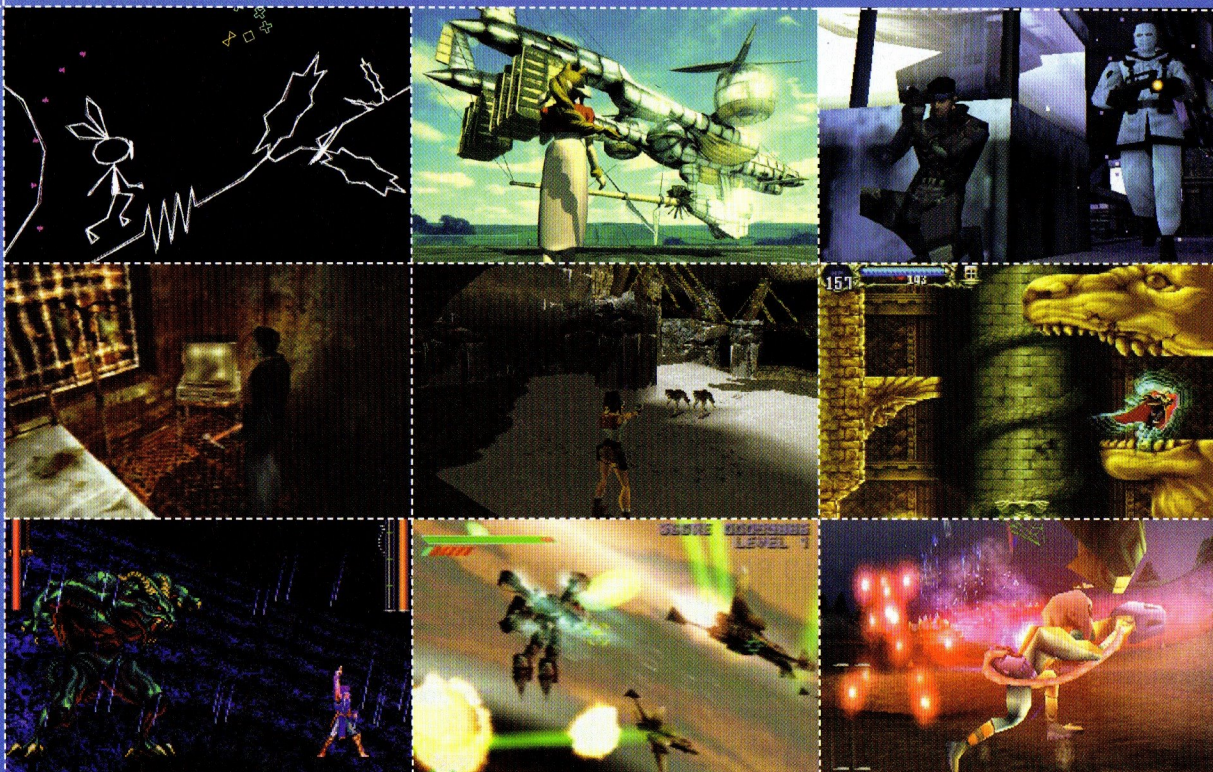
A: WiFi connectivity speeds depend on the quality of the signal, your distance from the Hotspot and how many people are using that Hotspot at a particular time. PSP uses the standard 802.11b connection which transmits information at a maximum speed of 11 megabits per second.

Q What is the range of access with WiFi?

A: The WiFi signal typically extends to about 150 feet from a Hotspot. However, the range will be reduced when there's metal or concrete in the way.

Q Can I surf the Internet with PSP WiFi?

A: All European PSPs are Internet-enabled, although there are a few restrictions. Flash-enabled sites won't work yet, and because of the screen size, some sites don't display well, however, future firmware updates will integrate Flash support.



A PSP-PERFECT Year For Sony

7,000 NEW GAMES!

Play PSone games on your PSP

Sony reveals the mouth-watering year ahead for PSP

[PSONE-DERFUL]

Brilliantly, you'll soon be able to play PSone games on PSP – here's our revival wishlist...

- 1. METAL GEAR SOLID**
The best game on PSone would look even better on PSP.
- 2. CASTLEVANIA: SYMPHONY OF THE NIGHT**
This unsung 2D hero is just made for gaming on the go.
- 3. FINAL FANTASY VII & VIII**
Epic RPGs with stunning visuals. Timeless classics.
- 4. SILENT HILL**
The best in the series on any format – a must for PSP.
- 5. TOMB RAIDER**
We've gone all nostalgic thanks to Lara's return (see page 56). A gaming landmark.

The 2006 PlayStation Business Briefing might sound duller than a blow to the head with a lead DualShock, but this year's Tokyo event hosted a string of stunning PSP announcements from Sony's 'Mr PlayStation', Ken Kutaragi.

With the planet already in the grip of a PSP pandemic – 15 million have

of fresh peripherals and connectivity upgrades that will make Sony's hand-held a key link between it's generations of home consoles.

Sony will begin rolling out PSP's new features with a series of Firmware updates that will upgrade your hand-held's operating system without the need to spend extra

Ken Kutaragi let slip the possibility of using the PSP as a remote control for the PS3

been shipped worldwide, over 1 million to the UK, making it the fastest selling console ever – Sony could be forgiven for wallowing in its success.

Now the prospects for PSP owners are heating up once again with news

money. The first will enable your PSP to access sites with Flash content, making web-browsing far easier and more varied. It will also provide improved RSS support (for viewing net broadcasting such as podcasts)



so you can playback and save internet radio. A further Firmware update will add video capabilities so you can grab TV clips, such as football highlights, and stream them to, or store them on, your increasingly powerful PSP.

ADDED EXTRAS

These upgrades are small-fry compared with the superb peripherals due for release this year, however. An official GPS add-on will be available from October, Phil Harrison, Sony Computer Entertainment President, Worldwide Studios, has confirmed. The device will update every second, will take just 40 seconds to locate your precise position from a cold start and will be able to provide portable satellite navigation for PSP owners. Better still, it'll be utilised in games such as the next instalment of *Hot Shots Golf* which will give you downloadable content depending on your location. In fact, Ken Kutaragi revealed, some games are already GPS-ready and on the shelves now.

He didn't name names, but we reckon GPS capabilities would be ideal for the likes of *Talkman*, an advanced translation tool with an engaging playable element.

And, in pure gaming terms, there are delicious possibilities for a PSP that can detect your proximity to other PSP gamers. Surely this device will enable you to travel to your

rivals' turf and battle them in WiFi face-offs...

Even more exciting is news that EyeToy will be coming to PSP in September thanks to a new camera peripheral that will sense your motions and which also boasts a microphone. That peripheral will also enable you to place video calls via your PSP's built-in networking capabilities (with an October Firmware update).

LOOKING FORWARD

Perhaps the most thrilling add-on for your PSP is another October Firmware update which will enable you to play full PSone games (see PSone-derfull).

Phil Harrison revealed at the Game Developers Conference 2006, San José, that the update will let you boot games from your memory stick and grab a PSone emulator via Sony's new E-distribution system.

And while your hand-held will provide a link to PlayStation's past, it will also be ready to hook-up to your PS3, due for a simultaneous worldwide release in November.

It's always been expected that the PSP would connect to the PS3 via its WiFi wireless capabilities, but Ken Kutaragi let slip the possibility of using the PSP as a remote control for the PS3. And he suggested users could stream video from their PS3 to their hand-held. It's tantalising stuff and proof of PSP's status as the most exciting gaming gadget on earth. ■

WIRELESS GLOSSARY

An A-Z of useful terms from the wireless world

802.11b:

A standard for wireless Internet access that offers connection speeds of up to 11 megabits per second (Mbps) between the access point and WiFi-enabled devices. This is integrated into the PSP and enables wireless connection to the Internet, and between PSPs for multiplayer gaming. 802.11b is equivalent to the Apple Airport card which provides wireless networking in Macs.

802.11g:

A new wireless technology that provides faster connection speeds than 802.11b – up to 54 Mbps. Equivalent to the Apple Extreme Airport card.

Access Point:

Any location where a WiFi signal can be received.

Bandwidth:

The amount of information that can be transmitted in a given period of time over a wired or wireless network. Bandwidth is expressed as bits of data per second, or bps.

Hotspot:

Another name for an access point located in public locations, such as airports or cafes, where a wireless signal for an Internet connection originates.

Roaming:

Roaming agreements between WiFi providers enable customers to obtain service from another provider's Hotspot, usually for a nominal charge.

T1 Connection:

A high-speed Internet connection carrying data at a speed of 1.54 Mbps for uploads and downloads. These lines are often used to connect a Hotspot to the network.

WiFi Alliance:

An association formed to certify standards for wireless products.

WiFi:

Short for Wireless Fidelity, WiFi is the popular term for the technology that lets you connect to the Internet at broadband speeds without using wires. It also lets you connect wirelessly with other WiFi-enabled devices, as with the PSP.

WLAN:

Wireless Local Area Networks enable users to connect to a local area network (LAN) through a connection using wireless access.

BASICS

- EyeToy for PSP (September)
- GPS add-on due (October)
- PSone downloads (October)
- Make video calls (October)
- Connect with PS3 (November)

[MUSIC]

The pick of the best music to squeeze onto your PSP



[HOW TO]

GET MUSIC ON YOUR PSP



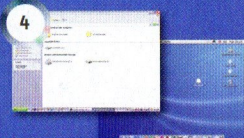
1 Insert a Memory Stick Duo or Memory Stick PRO Duo into your PSP.



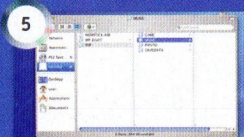
2 Connect one end of a USB cable to the top of the PSP and the other to the PC port.



3 Go into your PSP's settings menu and select 'USB connection' to start the link.



4 Click the Removable Disk icon in your PC's 'My Computer' folder.



5 A number of folders appear. Click on the PSP folder, then click on the Music folder.



6 Now simply drag MP3s from your computer into the Music folder to store them.



7 Right-click the Memory Stick icon and select 'Eject' to safely disconnect it.



8 Select your PSP's Music operation and to play any of the music files.



BAND PROFILE

THE KNIFE

🎵 The best thing to come out of Sweden since... umm, lumber?

They describe some of their music as 'sick'. They recently dressed up as crows for a photo shoot. The video for one of their songs, *Pass This On*, features a transvestite miming a song in a Swedish working men's club. And you probably know one of their songs much better than you realise. Meet

Completely electronic, composed on computers, The Knife have only just decided to take their material live, unsure of how to transfer their sharp studio sound to the stage.

Perhaps the best introduction to their sound is *Heartbeats* – the one you've most likely heard before. Their first single, recently covered by fellow

[THE TRACKS]

- > *Heartbeats* (iTunes)*
- > *Pass This On* (iTunes)
- > *Girl's Night Out* (iTunes)
- > *Silent Shout* (iTunes)
- > *We Share Our*
- > *Mother's Health* (iTunes)
- > *Forest Families* (iTunes)

The video for *Pass This On* features a transvestite mining a song in a Swedish working men's club

The Knife: Swedish brother and sister duo Olaf and Karin Dreijer.

It might be because of Karin's tendency to screech and squawk like a mad woman, and her angular Scandinavian accent but the first comparison many make of The Knife's distinctive vocals is with Bjork. The music, however, is entirely different.

Swede Jose Gonzalez and used in the Sony Bravia bouncing balls advert gave them a top 10 hit by proxy. In the advert it's an achingly beautiful love song – The Knife's original is a different proposition. It keeps the melody and lyrics, but places it over a backdrop of looping keyboard barks and electronic steel drum hits. While Gonzalez lent a

[THE ALBUMS]

- > *The Knife* (2004) (Rabid) (iTunes)
- > *Deep Cuts* (2004) (Rabid) (iTunes)
- > *Silent Shout* (2006) (Rabid) (iTunes)



GEAR

The best gadgets and gizmos on the market to enhance your PSP



[*iTunes]

If you use iTunes you'll find that you can't play the tracks bought from the Music Store on your PSP direct. The best way round this is to burn the music to a CD and then re-rip the tracks back to your computer as MP3s.

[MP3 Downloads]

www.karmadownload.com
Has the largest selection across all genres, boasting 200,000 files. An easy site to search and use, it also offers credit card draining one click purchasing (careful!) with individual tracks averaging at 89p a pop.

www.djdownload.com
If you're looking for something dance music oriented, this is where to come. Incredibly up-to-date, sometimes way ahead of the shops, MP3s range from £1.49 to £1.99 for the ultra-high quality 320kbps files.

www.bleep.com
One for the more obscure tunes, Bleep represents hundreds of independent labels with tracks costing 99p a go. Best of all, unlike some download sites, all the tracks here are free of Digital Rights Management.

www.wippit.com
More of a mix of pop and rock, this covers all genres and has a mix of MP3s that will play on the PSP, and WMAs which will require additional converting. Prices for individual downloads start at 29p but are closer to £1 for popular tracks.

round-the-campfire charm to the song, you can't beat the urgency of the original's delivery.

Hearbeats features on 2004's *Deep Cuts*, alongside two other epic tunes – the swirling *You Take My Breath Away*, which sounds like an attack by digital killer bees when it hits its stride, and the epic *Pass This On*, which features a Jamaican beach party's worth of steel drums and a somehow tortured, contorted vocal floating over the summery backdrop. *Silent Shout*, their third album, was released earlier this year to rave reviews offering a more contemplative, downbeat set of songs. Given Karin and Olaf's reluctance to publicise themselves or sign to a major label, it seems unlikely to bother the top 40. All the more reason to get downloading then and make the world aware of The Knife. ■ **George Walter**

Photo: Elin Bengte

Joytech Media Amp

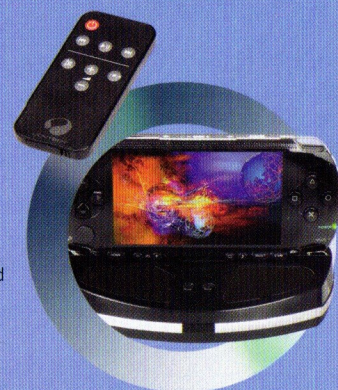
Manufacturer: Joytech Price: £24.99 Release: Out Now

What is it: If you've ever had that twitching pins and needles effect from clutching your PSP for too long, say, when watching *Dune* on the tiny screen, then this is the gadget for you. It essentially turns the PSP into a mini-cinema, complete with integrated stereo speakers and a natty stand to avoid nasty neck-ache.

Why you need it: Because you'll ruin your hands if you persist in watching long movies without a stand. Also, the speakers will promote the PSP's inbuilt stereo sound and it acts as a charger while you watch.

Why you don't: You have hands, you can hold the black block and watch. Also, Joytech's own Power Dock offers the stand option, though lacks the speakers.

Judgment: If you're lazy or have developed PSP claw-hand, and have an extra tenner to spend, then this will see you right. **4/5**



Joytech Power Dock + Screen Shield

Manufacturer: Joytech Price: £14.99 Release: Out Now

What is it: A stand to hold your PSP for perfect viewing and a sun screen to block out those pesky rays from interfering with your gaming. As well as leaving your hands free to fiddle while you watch the unnaturally long *King Kong* for the fifth time, the Power Dock also acts as a battery charger.

Why you need it: Like the Joytech Media Amp the main purpose of the Power Dock is to ease the stress on your hands. So, no more hand cramp in those long flights and train journeys.

Why you don't: Again, like the Media Amp you do have hands, and is it really so stressful to hold the PSP while you use it? Also, the Screen Shield has a minimal effect on the PSP's widescreen panel.

Judgment: This is a handy gadget for use on long journeys where it can be placed on a level surface. But it's hardly essential. **3/5**



Joytech ArmorLite Case

Manufacturer: Joytech Price: £6.99 Release: Out Now

What is it: Protects the PSP from grubby hands and the screen from being crushed, scratched or smashed. Handy.

Why you need it: Here's a true story, a friend of *OPSP*, let's call him Fat Bob, spent his wages on a new PSP the day of launch, then sat on it by accident and crushed the little screen something silly. Now, in Fat Bob's case he could have done with an ArmorLite Case, as it would have saved the PSP.

Why you don't: Two reasons: firstly it's a bit tricky to play many PSP games with the ArmorLite Case attached as it gets in the way of button presses; and secondly, unlike Fat Bob we don't all carry our PSPs around in our back pockets waiting to be sat on.

Judgment: A handy case if you're prone to accidents but the Sony wallet does just as good a job. **3/5**



[PSP PLUS]

[FILM FILE]

Watch these films on your hand-held



[HOW TO]

GET MOVIES ON YOUR PSP

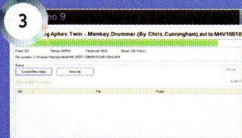
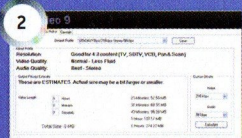
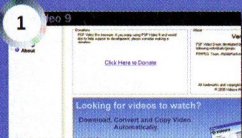
Converting your DVD collection or optimising your home movies for your PSP isn't as hard as you might think...

Got video files you want to watch on the go? Follow our simple guide...

PSP only plays certain types of video file – MP4, AVC – so you need to convert your movie file before you can play them on your PSP. The easiest way to do this is by using a program like PSP Video g 1, available at www.pspvideo.com. It's free and easy to use, and transfers the finished files to PSP automatically.

Download the program and choose your video settings in the 'Setup' tab 2. Tinker with the resolution, frame rate and so on until you've found the balance between video quality and file size that suits you (you may want to use the 'Profile Picker' with its automatic settings and descriptions of quality level).

Now click the 'Convert' tab and select 'Convert New Video'. Find the file you want to copy from the menu. Once converted, PSP Video g automatically prepares the file so that your PSP can find it 3. Plug your PSP into your PC's USB port, click the 'Copy' tab and you're away 4.



The best thing about the PSP is that it's much more than just a games machine – it's a total entertainment system. And with the latest UMD film releases you can take your favourite movies with you wherever you go. Everything from classic horror to comedy and action. Perfect for when you want to take a break from gaming or fill the hours on a long journey. Over the next pages we round up the best movies around. For prime viewing, you might want to invest in a deluxe toilet seat. ■



The very latest UMD releases in stores now!

Amityville II
Harry Potter And The Goblet Of Fire
Gothika
Halloween 2
Platoon UE
The Dead Zone
The Exorcism Of Emily Rose
The Legend Of Zorro



Aliens

Distributor: Fox
Rating: 18
Extras: None

This is a very '80s take on the classic *Alien* premise; it's all one-liners, big guns and men being men.

At the heart of the action is Sigourney Weaver's anti-hero, a woman who just wants to rid herself of the Alien once and for all, yep you guessed it, this time it's personal. With *Terminator*'s James Cameron



[SCI-FI]

The Matrix: Revolutions

Distributor: Warner Bros.
Rating: 15
Extras: None

This was a big deal back in 2003 as men took to wearing long leather trenchcoats in the summer heat and the world seemed happy to accept the Wachowski Brothers' sub-anime vision of the future.

Well, by the end of the year we all hated *The Matrix*, or rather *Reload* and *Revolutions*. Massive disappointment led to a downturn in leather sales and no-one bought another POD album.

Against this backdrop we can sit on a train and watch *Revolutions*, which has aged pretty well. Putting aside the fact that it is leagues below the fantastic original, there is still a lot to enjoy in here. The special effects and set-piece battles against the machines are superbly put together, if a little dizzying at times. The moment the metallic



octopus-like creatures invade Zion and are met by mechs is a Hollywood first. Though Keanu and co often become lost amidst the muddle of explosions, CGI tentacles and evangelistic gobbledygook, there is still a lot to enjoy so long as you take the Wachowski's biblical retelling with a pinch of salt.

Though *Revolutions* is a muddled mess of sub-par anime references, bad-acting and appalling dialogue; and although it was the biggest disappointment since Hayden Christensen minced through your childhood memories, it's not as bad as you remember. **6**■10

[You might also like]

- Predator
- Terminator
- Starship Troopers

directing the action, *Aliens* has less suspense than the original, preferring to bludgeon you with gore and explosions rather than artsy shocks. Okay, so it's cowboys and Indians in space, the cavalry racing to save the settlers from disaster, but Indians have never looked as good as Geiger's creation. **10**■10

Independence Day

Distributor: Fox
Rating: 12
Extras: None

After the success of *Stargate*, producer/director combo Emmerich and Devlin were handed a big wad of cash and told to make the movie of their dreams. What they made was *War Of The Worlds* meets *The Tearing Inferno*. This global sci-fi disaster movie works

despite the premise: the explosions are huge (the White House takes one) and the assembled cast, which includes Will Smith, Jeff Goldblum and Bill Pullman, all manage to overcome personal dilemmas and lead the human race to victory. Great B-movie sci-fi schlock. **7**■10

[ACTION]

X-Men/X-Men 2

Distributor: Fox
Rating: 15
Extras: None

Though these will be sold separately, Bryan Singer's two *X-Men* adventures are some of the best comic-to-screen adaptations you'll see.

The original movie really shook things up. With a mature script

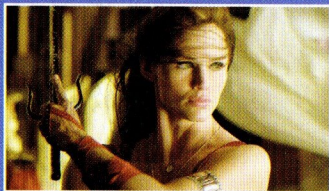


dealing with alienation and bigotry, great acting from established legends such as Patrick Stewart and Ian McKellen, and some stunning set-piece events *X-Men* is a breakthrough crossover movie that treats the source material and fans with respect. Obviously, *Catwoman*, *DareDevil* and *Fantastic Four* sunk any hopes of their being a new breed of comic movie.

The sequel, *X-Men 2* is a middle-movie in the strictest sense. This film is darker, moodier and more playful with the *X-Men* universe. Freed from having to establish what the mutant thing was all about, Singer could concentrate on building the tensions between mutants and humans. And as with the best middle-movies, *X-Men 2* leaves you on a cliffhanger ready and waiting for the new third film.

If you don't own these classics then this could be a good time to catch-up with the *X-Men*, you won't find too many comic crossover movies better than these.

9 ■ 10 10 ■ 10



Elektra

Distributor: Fox
Rating: 15
Extras: None

Spin-off movies will generally be something to avoid, after all, who remembers *Ewoks* with a degree of pleasure? But in the case of Jennifer Garner's assassin-for-hire you will be pleasantly surprised.

After the events of the terrible *DareDevil* movie, studio heads decided on resuscitating the Elektra character and giving Garner her own ass-kicking superhero vehicle. The plot is meaningless: stone cold killer Elektra gets all emotional over her next victim, a single-father and his daughter, and decides to protect them. The hunter becomes the hunted and they hold-up in a cabin in the woods to fight off an onslaught from supernatural ninjas.

This is comic book movie making at its barest, Garner is good but never shines and a script is non-existent, but the action is slick enough to hold the lesser elements together. A couple of inspired moments, such as the living tattoo, add a little sparkle, but this is effectively a decent movie based on an average comic. 5 ■ 10

Conan The Destroyer

Distributor: Sanctuary
Visual Entertainment

Rating: 15

Extras: Audio Commentary, Original Trailer

This sequel seemed to be everything the original John Milius directed movie wasn't. The sex, gore and muted realism of the first movie was out and in its place Arnie was asked to be a 'caring' Conan, bantering with a sidekick while on a mission to protect a princess' virginity.

This new Conan was more in-keeping with the screen persona Arnie would cultivate in later movies, but it made this sequel a little flat and toothless. Director Richard Fleischer, whose previous movies included *20,000 Leagues Under The Sea* for Disney, was a more family friendly moviemaker, aiming for a pulp-fantasy look and feel.

Though *Conan The Destroyer* is more immediate than the original it lacks the sense of brutality and wonder that Milius brought to the character. On UMD it works well enough, and there are a couple of extras, but this is hardly an essential buy. 6 ■ 10



Behind Enemy Lines

Distributor: Fox

Rating: 15

Extras: 4 Deleted scenes / NAVY Featurette

Based loosely on the real life story of a US Navy pilot shot down in Bosnia during the recent Balkan crisis, *Behind Enemy Lines* is a Hollywood thriller all the way. Owen Wilson plays the hotshot pilot with a loose interpretation of the term 'no fly zone' and Gene Hackman is his equally loose cannon commanding officer. What follows is a standard chase movie cut with heavy-handed sentiment and America's frustrated grasp of the region's politics: "I just want to punch a Nazi," mumbles Wilson. 6 ■ 10

Speed

Distributor: Fox

Rating: 15

Extras: None

Keanu Reeves famously built up his 'cop arms' in order to get into his

character for *Speed*. Some actors put on weight or join the army to 'get into character', Reeves pumps iron. The plot? Reeves' cop jumps aboard a runaway bus that will explode if it drops below 50mph. Our hero needs to outwit the terrorist, save the passengers and find time to get the girl (Sandra Bullock). The simple premises are often the best and *Speed* works all the better for it. 7 ■ 10

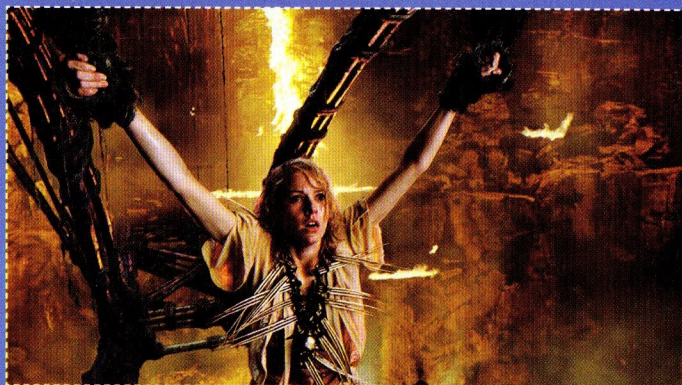
The Transporter 2

Distributor: Fox

Rating: 18

Extras: None

When it comes to commitment to a job, Jason Statham's Frank Martin



Peter Jackson's King Kong

Distributor: Universal

Rating: 15

Extras: None

Just what the PSP needs: a three-and-a-half hour movie. An epic re-telling of the classic 1933 ape escape movie, you're going to need strong wrists to sit through all of this.

But you will want to try, as Peter Jackson's *King Kong* is a brilliantly realised and beautifully shot movie, which puts paid to fears that this would be another rehash of a bygone classic (are you listening John Guillermin?). On the surface it's all about the colourful, vibrant CGI. Kong himself looks amazing and every scene he's in is imbued with emotion, which by proxy makes the actual human cast a little lightweight.

This is *King Kong*'s biggest set-back really, as though much is made of the movie striving for realism and dramatic credibility, you are buying this to watch a big ape smash through New York and battle dinosaurs. Which doesn't happen until around an hour in, after Jackson has built character and narrative.

Once the ape starts swinging you won't take your eyes off the PSP's little screen

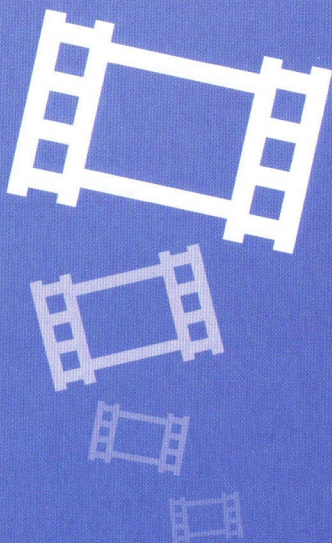


However, once the action does get going and the ape starts swinging you won't take your eyes off the PSP's little screen. The action really is relentless and the realism afforded to Kong draws you into his plight – the big lummo just wants to see his bird, give the guy a break.

So, Peter Jackson's *King Kong* is a great big over-loaded blockbuster that isn't quite as deep and credible as Jackson would have you believe. On PSP the film's length can be a burden and you may find yourself skipping to the final two-thirds in frustration. However, as remakes go this is still one of the most accomplished, the 1976 disaster is forgotten. 8 ■ 10

[You might also like]

- Godzilla
- The Mummy
- Ghostbusters



The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe is a breathless, fun and elegant fantasy adventure



The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, The Witch And The Wardrobe

Distributor: Touchstone
Rating: 12
Extras: None

After three years of *The Lord Of The Rings* and *Harry Potter* clogging up the Christmas movie charts it was only a matter of time before some bright spark in Hollywood combined the two and released a *Narnia* movie. If they could have called this *Harry Potter And The Lord of Narnia*, they would have.

This isn't to say the resulting movie is bad. In fact this version of *The Chronicles Of Narnia: The Lion, The Witch And The Wardrobe* is possibly the best yet brought to the big screen. The script follows the book's story faithfully and the creature and special effects designs are immaculate. This really does seem to have been a fantasy movie made with a passion for the source material.

It's worth remembering that this is a children's movie though

takes the biscuit. This fella will take bullets, expose himself to a fatal virus, drive his precious Audi off a seven-story building and ruin a good suit, and all to save his 'package', which for this sequel is his employer's child.

The Transporter 2 doesn't let up, from the opening heist to the closing plane crash, Frank Martin is on a one man mission to kick arse, only sparing time out to quip one-liners as he punches, shoots and crashes his way to the grand finale. If you're after an effects heavy, stunt-a-minute actioner with a smattering of Bondesque gadgetry and a loose grasp on reality, then *The Transporter 2* is for you. Take a look on page 113 for an interview with *Transporter 2* star, Jason Statham. **7** **10**

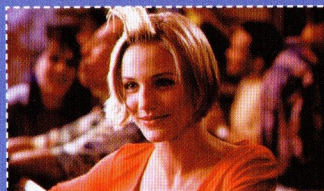


and much of the darker sub-text of the book has been removed to make way for brash and breezy battles, banter and CGI wizardry, which all suits the PSP's small screen perfectly.

Also, as it has remained by and large faithful to the plot and characters of the classic novel, it can feel a little old fashioned at times. In contrast to Potter's knowing nods to, well, the *Narnia* books as much as anything, this movie can feel a little earnest.

However, as it stands *The Lion, The Witch And The Wardrobe* is a breathless, fun and elegant fantasy adventure that will appeal to anyone who is after another tale of epic salvation and swords 'n' sorcery. By all means, take a peak inside the closet... **8** **10**

[COMEDY]



There's Something About Mary

Distributor: Fox
Rating: 15
Extras: None

Mary just wants a normal life. She wants to date, bake and go to work. She doesn't want to be stalked by an accident prone Ben Stiller and Matt Dillon's sleazy private detective. Coming from the tasteless minds of the Farrelly brothers (*Dumb And Dumber*, *King Pin*) *There's Something About Mary* is an anti-romance movie; the hero loses his manhood in an opening zipper scene and it all goes downhill from there... or uphill depending on your tastes. **7** **10**



Evolution

Distributor: Sony
Rating: 12
Extras: None

Replacing ghosts for aliens, *Evolution* trends the same path as '80s classic *Ghostbusters*. David Duchovny plays the Bill Murray part, Julianne Moore the Sigourney Weaver role and Sean William Scott does his best to imitate Dan Aykroyd's bungling scientist. With some slick effects, cheap 'anal probe' gags and an overriding sense of fun, *Evolution* is pure fun from the opening *X-Files* in-joke to, erm, the closing *X-Files* in-joke. **8** **10**

[DRAMA]

Phone Booth

Distributor: Fox
Rating: 15
Extras: None

One of the ultimate concept thrillers, the conceit behind *Phone Booth* asks us to watch in real-time, to stew with hero Colin Farrell as he struggles to convince a killer to let him out of a phone booth. Stop laughing at the back. It works,

as every minute the killer adds more fuel to the fire, shooting pedestrians and placing Farrell in the firing line, turning the cops against the trapped booth-man and forcing him to face up to a life of lies. Sure, it's deep, but it's also very silly. **6** **10**

Master And Commander: Far Side Of The World

Distributor: Fox
Rating: 15
Extras: None

An action film with a brain is the best way to describe *Master And Commander*, as while you won't see too many action scenes directed with such splinter-shredding realism there's a strong script tying the whole thing together.

Russell Crow plays a driven captain obsessed with capturing a French warship, and is willing to sacrifice everyone to get it. The strength of the movie lays with the great cast and a real depth of realism in every shot – the 19th Century brain surgery scene is inspired.

This is a great, old-fashioned adventure movie with unflinching historical accuracy. It's a voyage not to be missed. **9** **10**



Ocean's Eleven

Distributor: Warner Bros.
Rating: 15
Extras: None

There are times when you need to shut down and just watch a bloated, self-indulgent Hollywood star-fest, and, for this, *Ocean's Eleven* is up there with the best of them.

The all-star cast fighting for screen-time includes George Clooney, Brad Pitt, Elliot Gould, Matt Damon, Andy Garcia and Julia Roberts. The plot, for what it's worth, has the assembled A-listers attempting the ultimate heist, to rob three Las Vegas casinos simultaneously.

But *Ocean's Eleven* isn't really about plot or script, which are both good enough, it's about the beautiful people being beautiful for around two hours, and let's face it, sometimes that's all that counts when you have to fill time travelling to work. **7** **10**



[JASON STATHAM]

Lock, Stock's hard man talks stunts, violence and about being a working class James Bond

OPSP: You did all your own stunts in *Transporter 2*, did you ever come a cropper?

Statham: I twisted an ankle, pulled a hamstring and got a bit of shrapnel from a squib in the wrist. There was a close shave when I jumped from a jet ski to the back of this moving bus and there was nowhere to put any safety rigs. With two vehicles travelling at 30 miles an hour independently, it can be a bit hairy jumping from the back of one to the other.

OPSP: How many of the driving stunts did you do?

Statham: I did as much as they'd allow me because that's my favourite stuff, you know? As a kid I always dreamt of being a Formula One driver. Even as kids we used to buy the hatchback GTis and race each other, so I've always had a passion for being a bit of a loose cannon behind the wheel. Now I'm just a boring old man who drives very safely, but only because I get to express myself in my movies. When

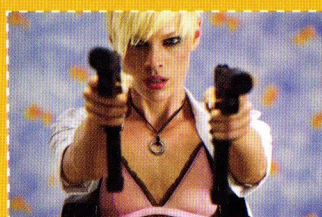
I got to jump in the Lamborghini it was on a big airfield. I took that thing around and I was doing donuts and wheel spins and they were saying, 'Calm down! We are going to need new tyres and we haven't shot the first scene yet!'

OPSP: Do you think your character in *Transporter* could take the place of James Bond?

Statham: That's a good observation. It's the guy who drives the fast cars, can beat up the rest of the guys and get the girl, but I don't quite get the girl. You could say it's a working class James Bond, a Bond who drinks Heineken and not Dom Perignon. He's a bit less refined, but still very capable.

OPSP: Is *Transporter 2* more violent than the first one?

Statham: I think if violence is going to be depicted in a film, then just show it how it should be. But that sometimes doesn't translate to a movie such as *The Transporter*



because the tone of the movie isn't something Martin Scorsese would do with *Casino* for example, where he puts a guy's head in a vice. We are not trying to create gratuitous violence, but if there's going to be some violence then I would like to see it followed through fully.

OPSP: How was filming *Transporter 2* different from filming the first one?

Statham: Um, well obviously it is more demanding because we have tried to exceed what we did in the first one, making stunts a little bit bigger. We had a bit more money to spend too and we wanted to make the movie bigger in its scope, which I think we achieved.

OPSP: What was shooting in Miami like?

Statham: It's a chance to film on amazing beaches, I mean, we were

driving cars on the beach, using the jet skis in the ocean, it has all that stuff. We tried to create that with some of the far-fetched stunts that we put in the movie. It's not to be taken too seriously. We are just having a bit of fun at the end of the day, and I think Miami is a great place to do that.

OPSP: In a lot of your roles, you play the hard man, the tough guy. Is that your thing?

Statham: Well, not necessarily. If you care to look at Guy Ritchie's movies, I play the characters that are in trouble. There are worse-looking people in the Guy Ritchie movies than the roles I get, so it's not like I am the bad guy – there are always people way badder than me. But people just assume that. So it's not like I'm searching out roles to try to be the bad guy, no. I'm not really the bad guy in any of the *Transporter* films.

OPSP: You are doing a sequel to *The Italian Job*, it's called *The Brazilian Job*, right?

Statham: Yeah, that's coming up. They haven't written the script yet. The prospect of working with Wahlberg, Charlize and little Seth Green is very exciting.

When I got to jump in the Lamborghini it was on a big airfield. I was doing donuts and wheel spins and they were saying 'Calm down! We are going to need new tries and we haven't even shot the first scene yet!'

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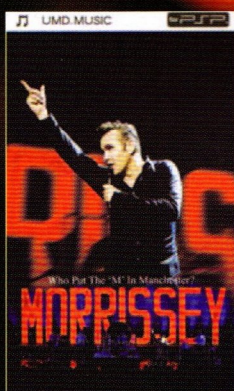
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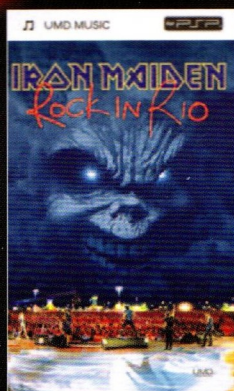
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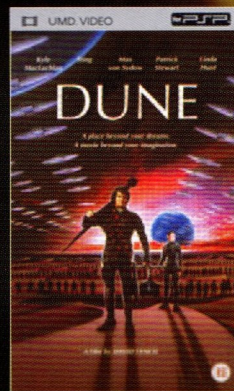
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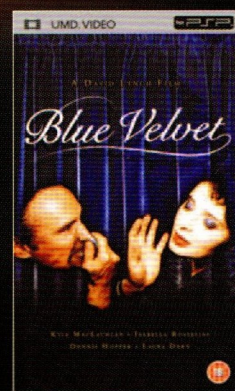
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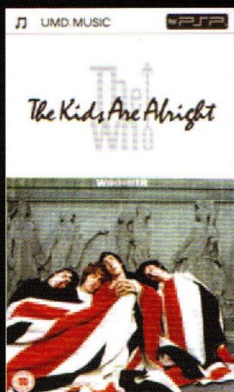
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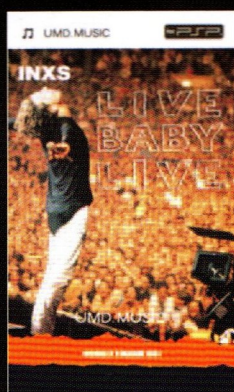
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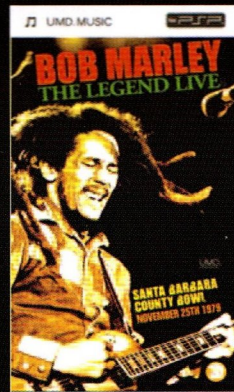
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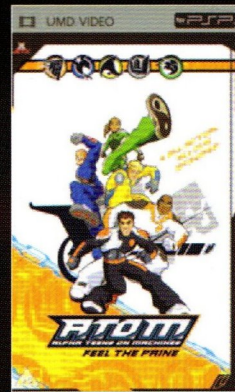
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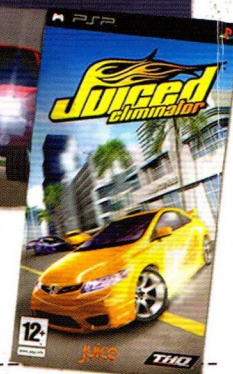
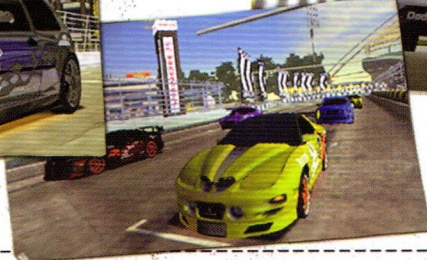
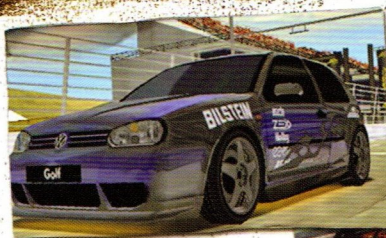
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